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From “invisible natives” to an “irruption of indigenous identity”?

Two decades of change among the Tacana in the northern Bolivian Amazon

“Al final nos dimos cuenta todos que éramos tacanas”
(Tacana leader 2001, quoted in Herrera 2009: 1).

1. Introduction: The Tacana

In the mid 1980s, a time of redemocratization and structural adjustment policies in Bolivia, consultations about a region suitable for field research on the situation of indigenous peoples in the context of “Amazonian development” led me to the Province of Iturrealde in the lowland north of the Department of La Paz (Figure 1). The culture of its indigenous inhabitants, the Tacana,¹ had been documented by German researchers in the early 1950s (Hissink & Hahn 1961; 1984). Also, under the motto *La Marcha al Norte*, the region was the focus of large infrastructure and agroindustrial projects which had already stimulated spontaneous colonization, but local people had little information about these activities nor support to defend their rights and interests. Between 1985 and 1988, I conducted about a year of village level field research in the region, mainly in Tumupasa, an ex-Franciscan mission among the Tacana founded in 1713 and transferred to its current location around 1770, Santa Ana, a mixed community founded in 1971, and 25 de Mayo, a highland colonist cooperative whose members had settled between Tumupasa and Santa Ana from 1979

1 Tacana branch of the Pano-Tacanan language family, whose other current members are the Araona, Cavineño, Ese Ejja, and Reyesano (Maropa). Despite several special “expeditions” in recent years, so far, there is no proof for the continued existence of the Toromona, supposedly the last isolated indigenous group of the Bolivian lowlands. Recently, the official spelling has been changed to Takana. Since most publications, including those by CIPTA, still use the spelling “Tacana”, it will be maintained in this article as well.

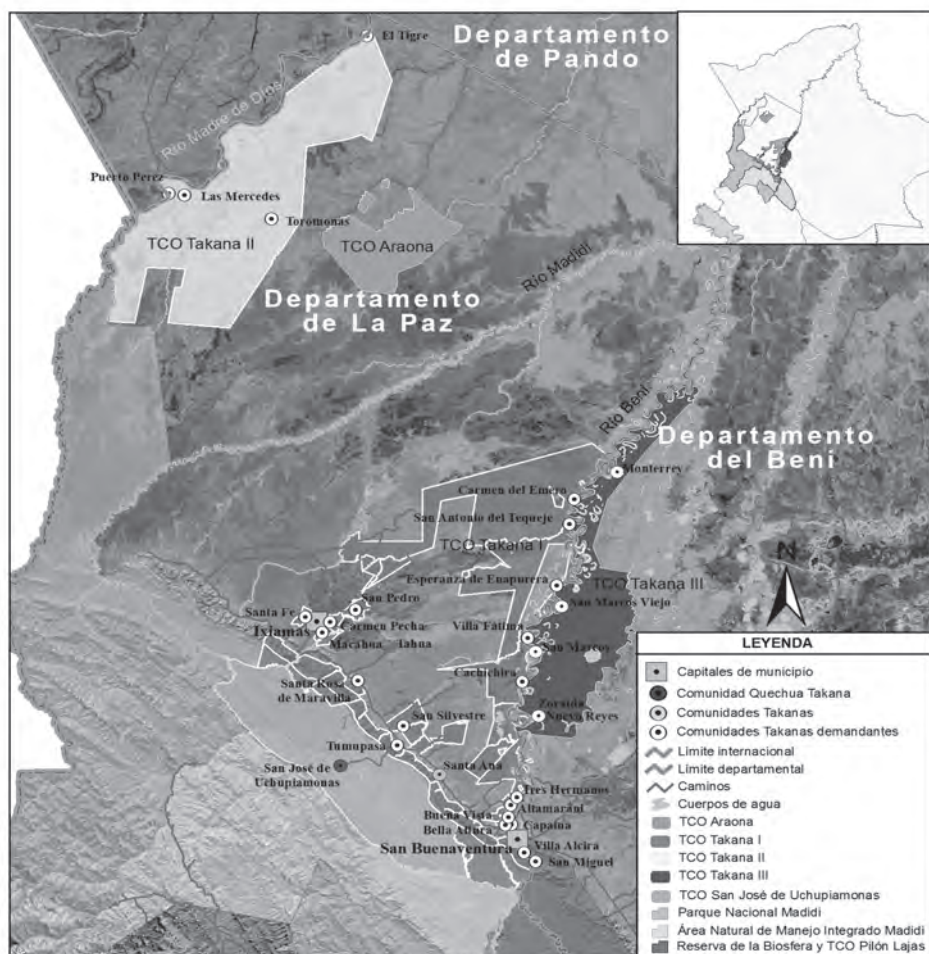


Figure 1. Province of Iturralde, Department of La Paz, Bolivia with Tacana Communities and Territories (TCOs)
(Produced for this article by Wildlife Conservation Society, La Paz, Bolivia, May 2009).

onwards.² The study was a comparative assessment of indigenous and colonist land use, living conditions and organizational strategies in the context of broader changes in the region (Wentzel 1989b). At the time, situations like the one in Iturralde were increasingly being addressed with “political ecology” approaches striving to systematically articulate local, regional, national and international events and processes (Schmink & Wood 1987; 1992).

For a presentation at the first *Reunión Anual de Etnología* in La Paz in August 1987, I borrowed from Anthony Stocks’ book on the Cocamilla in Peru (Stocks 1981) the title “Los nativos invisibles. Notas sobre la historia y realidad actual de los cocamilla del río Huallaga, Perú”, because I had witnessed that even a Bolivian World Bank anthropologist classified them as “campesinos orientales mestizos”, implying that they needed no special attention in the context of regional development (Kraljevic & Carpio 1986). I argued that “the Tacana” (as I continued to call them, like many anthropologists using a cover term hardly ever heard in the villages), like other indigenous peasants in the departments of Santa Cruz and Beni, were a product of imposed ethno-genesis in the three main missions of Tumupasa, San José de Uchupiamonas (1716), and Ixiamas (1721), all part of the Franciscan *Misiones de Apolobamba*. People of Tacana and mixed descent maintained – also in more recently founded smaller communities, but to quite different degrees (strongest in Tumupasa) – their language, social and political organization,³ both Catholicism and shamanism including an elaborate cycle

2 Graduate studies at the University of Florida and field research were funded by the Fulbright Commission, the Amazon Research and Training Program (ARTP) – later the Tropical Conservation and Development (TCD) Program – at the University of Florida, the Tinker Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation and the Dickinson Award in Tropical Agriculture. Since finishing graduate school, I have worked in the context of international development cooperation, both in Germany and in Indonesia and Brazil which gave me additional insights into the situation of indigenous peoples in tropical forest regions and recent changes both in terms of indigenous mobilization and major policy reforms (Wentzel 2006). Nevertheless, over the years, I have accompanied the situation in Bolivia through the internet and personal contacts, and I returned twice to Tumupasa and surroundings in November 1998 and November/December 2008 (to other areas of Bolivia also briefly in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007), gathering secondary information (e.g. from local records like the Libros de Acta/LdA), conducting informal interviews and observing meetings etc. This article was written in early 2009 while I was based at CIFOR (Center for International Research), Indonesia as a visiting scholar, after additional internet and library research. Peter Cronkleton, Heike Knothe, Esther Lopez, Pablo Pacheco, Klaus Rummenhöller and Robert Wallace provided comments and suggestions on the first draft of this article; Robert Wallace’s colleagues at Wildlife Conservation Society (La Paz) produced the map according to my indications.

3 Including a system of local authorities (*corregidor*, *cacique*, *policía* and up to nine *huarajes* or *guarajis*) and remnants of a communal justice system (see also Céspedes Zardan 2003; Gutiérrez Pérez 2003).

of *fiestas*⁴ (Figures 2 and 3), and a land use system based on extensive knowledge about the local environment (Wentzel 1987; Figure 4).



Figure 2. Good Friday Procession, Tumupasa, April 1987 (S. Wentzel).

Once the Tacana had recovered from the demographic decline of the early mission period, their history has been one of remarkable cultural continuity. The most striking expression of this is the persistence of shamanism and its rituals. In this hidden realm, until today the Tacana can most fully live out their stigmatized ethnic identity. This continuity – underneath outward acculturation which minimizes social friction – is a testimony to Tacana resistance against assimilative pressures, noticeable especially in Tumupasa. The Franciscans, the major “frontier institution” influential among the Tacana for over two centuries, were by no means interested in preserving the “non-Catholic” aspects of their culture. [...] Nevertheless, by instituting such cohesive devices as the system of political and religious authorities and the *fiesta* cycle which gave the Tacana a community-level identity as Christian Indians, they contributed to

4 Like almost all lowland indigenous peoples, the Tacana also had their experiences with protestant missionaries who, however, for different reasons never had much success. Even the bilingual education materials the missionaries developed were never accepted, apparently due to a mixture of resistance against their religious connotations and a growing rejection by the Tacana of their own language and culture. The Catholic Church since the 1942 creation of the *Vicariato Apostólico de Reyes* (which includes Iturralde) has been in the hands of mainly Swiss and German Redemptorists. By the 1980s, especially the priest of Tumupasa – active until today – was quite involved in community development activities (education, consumer cooperative etc.). The Redemptorists also supported participation in the *Encuentros Interculturales de la Conferencia Episcopal*, another contributing factor to “Tacana mobilization”.

their ethnic persistence. The most basic condition for this persistence, however, was that the Tacana maintained control over their land and forests. Despite extractive booms and busts and incipient pastoral and agricultural fronts, until the 1970s their resource base was never seriously threatened (Wentzel 1989b: 62).



Figure 3. Tacana shaman (*yanacona*), San José de Uchupiamonas, August 1987 (S. Wentzel).



Figure 4. Field preparation still with axes, Tumupasa, December 1986 (S. Wentzel).

The result of these processes was a nested hierarchy of identities: in Tumupasa, for example, these ranged from the most immediate communal identity as *Tumupaseño* (vs. *Ixiameño* or *Josesano*) to a clear distinction as Christians (*cristianucuana*) vis-à-vis “savages” like the Ese Ejja (members of the same language family but without a similar mission history and ridiculed in the *Chama* dance during local festivals, Figure 5), a latent class identity as “poor” and “exploited” (vis-à-vis patrons, traders etc.), a regional identity as lowland *Camba* vs. highland *Kolla*, and finally a growing national identity as Bolivians, the roots of which could be traced back to the participation of about 100 men from the region in the Chaco war in the 1930s. Because of the discrimination indigenous peoples suffered in Iturrealde (as all over the Bolivian lowlands), it had not been advantageous to publicly stress being Tacana or *indígena*, and parents had actively discouraged their children from using their language to avoid problems at school and beyond (Wentzel 1987).



Figure 5. *Tumupaseños* dressed up as *Chamas*, Fiesta de la Santísima Trinidad, Tumupasa, May 1988 (S. Wentzel).

At the end of my dissertation I made the following observations about “prospects for the future of the Tacana”:

Even if the outlined policy recommendations were implemented and the indigenous peasants had their land and forests protected and were receiving appropriate technical and social assistance, this would not necessarily guarantee the persistence of the Tacana as an ethnic group. Economic improvements are despite possible precautions likely to increase the internal differences in the indigenous communities. This could speed up the process of ethnic disintegration and acculturation, especially in the younger generation. The Tacana themselves should decide how to optimize between the economic, social, and environmental costs and benefits of their own development. However, to be able to do this, they not only need information about the likely consequences of currently available options, but also support in changing the conditions that constrain their choice. [...]

In view of the little esteem that even some of the most traditional Tacana exhibited for their own language and other aspects of their culture, attitudes which were pervasive in the younger generation, during my research I continuously stressed my interest in and appreciation of Tacana culture. I also tried to contribute to the Tacana’s realization that recent developments in Bolivia for the first time in the history of that country made it advantageous to appeal to their legitimate rights as indigenous inhabitants of the region. One attempt to strengthen the Tacana as ethnic group was to make them aware of and bring them together with the Lowland Indian Federation CIDOB⁵ which was founded in Santa Cruz in 1982 and with which [...] I had been in contact since 1984. [...]⁶

At the beginning of fieldwork in late 1986, I had brought documents and oral reports about CIDOB into village meetings in Tumupasa and Santa Ana which generated most interest among the more outward-oriented *vecinos*⁷ of Tumupasa who, however, objected to the in their view derogatory term *indígena* used by the organization (which has reclaimed it with a positive meaning). [...] The same concern came up when [...] Tumupasa received the CIDOB invitation to participate in its fall 1987 meeting, but after some deliberations the authorities decided to send two Tacana-speaking delegates [Figure 7]. [...] On the delegates’ return, there was no immediate reaction to their report which was presented in a village meeting [...].

5 Founded as *Central de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano*, in 1989 it redefined itself as a confederation and since 1994 has been structured in regional organizations, among them one in the Department of La Paz (<www.cidob-bo.org>; CIDOB 2008; see Riester 1985; Smith 1985 and Wentzel 1989a for early descriptions; Yashar 2005 for a recent analysis).

6 Since at the time “the best way to organize” was an open question, the same effort was made with regard to the national peasant federation CSUTCB (*Central Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*) founded in 1979, with whose representatives in the province I had been in contact since 1985. Two delegates from Tumupasa participated in its July 1987 congress in Cochabamba (Figure 6).

7 See Chapter 2.

However, by my return to Tumupasa in June of 1988, there were some signs for change. [T]he local authorities had requested [...] the reversal of the 100,000 hectare lumber concession superimposed over their territory “en favor de la Comunidad de TACANAS de Tumupasa”, probably their first petition stressing the village’s ethnic heritage. [...] Recently, upon pressure by a CIDOB member organization, the regional indigenous federation of the Beni department [...], the Bolivian government issued a Supreme Resolution in which it declared indigenous territories in the lowlands a “national and social necessity”. [T]he Tacana were mentioned as potential recipients [...]. In this context, Iturralde may well see a process of “indigenous mobilization”. I hope that this will benefit those who can most legitimately claim Tacana rights but are so far least vociferous in the regional and national context (Wentzel 1989b: 437-442).



Figure 6. David and Victor Cartagena representing Tumupasa at the III CSUTCB Congress in Cochabamba, July 1987 (S.Wentzel).

During the last two decades, there have been both rather dynamic changes and what seems to be an underlying continuity in the north of La Paz. The most important of the changes were the foundation of the Tacana organization CIPTA (*Consejo Indígena del Pueblo Tacana*) in the early 1990s, the recognition of two large Tacana territories, the *Tierra Comunitaria de Origen* or TCO Tacana I in 2003 (title over so far almost 388,500 ha) and TCO Tacana II in 2006 (official admission of almost 350,000 ha, title still pending), and the implementation of an impressive range of natural resource management and community development activities in these TCOs, based on regional sustainable development strategies. Parallel to this, from the neighboring Departments of Beni and Pando, where many Tacana (and members of other lowland indigenous peoples) went or were taken during the Amazonian rubber boom from the late 19th

century on, there have been reports on an “irrupción de la identidad indígena Tacana” (Herrera Sarmiento 1998) or on processes of “reconfiguring identities” and “Tacana retribalization” (Bathurst 2005).



Figure 7. Humberto Beyuma and Leonardo Marupa representing Tumupasa at the VI CIDOB Congress in Santa Cruz, November 1987 (S. Wentzel).



Figure 8. CIPTA Workshop in Tumupasa, November 1998 (S. Wentzel).

In this article, I want to document these changes, focusing on Iturrealde, but with some notes also on the situation in Beni and Pando. I will place the “Tacana mobilization” in the context of the ongoing processes of governance reform in Bolivia, but also of the striking continuity of “development models” for the region. The article does not have theoretical ambitions, although at the end I will discuss some relevant studies. My position is similar to that of Tania Li who (working in the even more complex Indonesian context) states that “self-identification as tribal or indigenous people is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed” (Li 2000: 2). Although I did not conduct systematic research during my revisits, at the end I will try to address the concern raised twenty years ago, “Who benefits?”, and a question an anthropologist asked me after my return: “Would the same results have been possible without an *ethnic* mobilization?”.

2. The regional context until 1989

What is today the north of the Department of La Paz (since 1938 Province of Iturrealde, see Figure 1) has been a transitional region between the highlands and lowlands since pre-Inca times. After conquest, as already mentioned, the Franciscan missions served as typical “frontier institutions”, concentrating and merging various ethnic groups in Tumupasa, San José de Uchupiamonas and Ixiamas (since 1963 the provincial capital). During the 19th century,

[...] the quinine and rubber booms, typical cases of early “extractive fronts”, through their labor demand syphoned off a large part of the Tacana population which had been conveniently concentrated and “domesticated” by the Franciscans. Parallel to this and continuing after the decline of the extractive economy, the intrusion of outsiders now also dedicated to ranching and agricultural activities not only continued to draw on native labor, but also started a slow but gradual process of territorial reduction (Wentzel 1989b: 54).

During and after these booms, the twin towns of Rurrenabaque (1840s) and San Buenaventura (1860s) on the Beni river as well as ranches and sugar estates were established by a growing regional elite with Tacana laborers. From the Agrarian Reform in 1953 onwards, many of these never very productive estates became independent communities, the oldest of which are Tahua and San Pedro in the Ixiamas area, and Buena Vista and Altamarani on the Beni river.

During this period, the Tacana who had remained in the ex-missions or were living in the newly independent communities continued to combine mainly subsistence agriculture with occasional wage labor in whatever opportunity arose. Wage labor involvement usually required long-term absences from the villages. In Tumupasa, in comparison to the turn of the century, social differentiation (expressed in racial and economic terms in local records)

had actually declined.⁸ Local estates and stores had been given up, and the descendents of the old patrons or traders who stayed in the village, especially those with Tacana mothers, after one or two generations lived in economic conditions not much different from those of the Tacana. However, until today they are called *vecinos* (“neighbors”) or *gente buena* (“the good people”) and often maintain a feeling of cultural superiority. This attitude was even more typical for the elite in the other two villages (Wentzel 1989b: 59-60).

Connected to La Paz through airstrips in Rurrenabaque and Ixiamas since the mid 1940s, the region since that time has become a focus of the regionalist *Paceñista* movement, which in its competition with the booming Department of Santa Cruz started promoting a growth pole approach with large infrastructure and agroindustrial development projects based on sugarcane. The first oil exploration started in 1956; two years later the first project for a large hydroelectric dam on the Beni river at the Bala mountain range was developed but never implemented. Road construction beyond the subtropical Alto Beni region towards the lowlands began in 1969.

In 1971 the new regional development corporation CORDEPAZ was put in charge of *La Marcha al Norte* (from La Paz via Ixiamas to Cobija in the Department of Pando) which included these projects as well as – sometimes – proposals for large-scale colonist settlement. During the military regimes of Presidents Banzer (1971-1978) and García Meza (1980-1981), a Brazilian consulting firm was hired twice and produced voluminous studies (Hidroservice-IPA 1978-1980), but besides some 2,700 ha of mechanized deforestation in one of CORDEPAZ’ two 50,000 ha concessions, the agroindustrial project did not take off. Parallel to this, in 1976 CORDEPAZ started building a gravel road from San Buenaventura to Ixiamas (less than 120 km) which advanced only slowly but, together with the propaganda about the region, immediately started to attract highland colonists (about 200 families by 1986). Despite a ban on land titling in Iturralde in 1975, especially the military regimes granted large tracts of land to often absentee owners interested primarily in collaterals for bank loans and/or speculation. After redemocratization in 1982, these projects and processes came under scrutiny, and several studies e.g. cautioned that the region’s soils were inadequate for intensive sugarcane production and that the benefit/cost ratios of many of the proposed projects were unsatisfactory. However, electoral (party) and other politics played a role in maintaining one or the other of these projects on the agenda.

One major change that happened virtually unannounced was the arrival of the first three logging companies in Ixiamas in 1987, after the entire road connection to

8 The books of the *Registro Civil* in Tumupasa, which have been kept since 1940, obliging the registrar to note race, profession, and literacy, distinguish between *indigenas* [...] and *blancos*, in later years also *mestizos* [...]. The “whites” listed were actually all of mixed descent but belonged to the local “elite” (*vecinos*).

La Paz (approx. 570 km) had become operational, at least during the dry season. Many local people only now realized that between 1979 and 1987, 16 companies, mainly from Santa Cruz,⁹ had obtained concessions over almost 2.9 million ha in one of the last major mahogany reserves in the Bolivian lowlands (CDF 1988). Initial protests by local and regional authorities soon gave way to attempts to capture at least some benefits, e.g. through informal arrangements with the companies.¹⁰

In 1989, my conclusion on the regional situation was that

[...] recent "development" policies for the area of San Buenaventura [...] never started from the regional – much less the indigenous – population's problems, needs and aspirations. Be their designers military or civilians, right or left-wing, projects were consistently aimed at extracting valuable natural resources and at establishing a large agroindustry, both for mainly nonregional benefit. Some projects were also geared at solving or at least diverting attention from serious problems elsewhere in the country, e.g. those brought about by the mining crisis. Under these circumstances, the region was promoted as escape valve for "surplus population", although the overall policy did not favor smallholder immigration. Not unfrequently, a hidden agenda of the projects was access to national and international funds or to political power (Wentzel 1989b: 89).

3. Indigenous mobilization and policy changes in Bolivia since 1990

During the last twenty years, Bolivia in general and the lowlands in particular have undergone profound changes, as a result of interdependent processes of increasing indigenous and peasant mobilization, and major national policy reforms, both of which received considerable international attention and support. These processes can only briefly be sketched here, focusing on issues relevant for the situation in Iturrealde and for the Tacana.

A key event in August-September 1990 which serves as a reference until today was the *Marcha por el Territorio y la Dignidad* of about 1,000 lowland Indians from Trinidad to La Paz. In reaction to increasing problems with timber companies in the Beni Department, they demanded and obtained the recognition of the first indigenous territories in Bolivia, a new and evolving legal category accommodating rights to forest

9 In this case, regional rivalry did not seem to matter, since CORDEPAZ was to receive 11% of the royalties.

10 In the Tumupasa area, since 1981 covered by the 100,000 ha concession already mentioned and accessible by road already in the mid 1980s, it was actually CORDEPAZ that constructed a road to and beyond the community Napashi (San Silvestre) and started to exploit *cedro*, another valuable timber species. In reaction to this, the provincial subprefect in 1984 initiated the *Cooperativa Maderera Iturrealde Ltda.*, with 60 institutional and individual members from San Buenaventura and Tumupasa. Production started in 1985 but came to a standstill in mid 1988 because the industrialist partner had withdrawn his sawmill.

areas and their resources. In 1991, CIDOB resubmitted its longstanding proposal for the *Ley de los Pueblos Indígenas del Oriente, el Chaco y la Amazonía* to parliament which, however, was considered unconstitutional at the time. Also in 1991 Bolivia ratified ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention 169 on indigenous rights.

Since 1992 (year of the Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development), the *Ley General del Medio Ambiente* (1333/1992) and since 1993, the *Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas* (SNAP) have provided a framework for environmental concerns. Since 1998, SERNAP (*Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas*) has been in charge of Bolivia's by now 22 national-level protected areas. These cover more than 170,000 km² or 15.5% of the country and overlap with or border on 44 indigenous territories, which has led to the development of joint management schemes (SERNAP 2007).

During the first government of President Sánchez de Lozada in which Aymara intellectual and activist Víctor Hugo Cárdenas served as vice-president, in 1994, the Bolivian Constitution was reformed, declaring the country – similar to other Latin American countries at the time – *multiétnico y pluricultural* (Art. 1) and recognizing indigenous territories with the new term *Tierras Comunitarias de Origen* (TCO, Art. 171). The new *Subsecretaria de Asuntos Étnicos* (SAE) in the *Ministerio de Desarrollo Humano* (MDH) was put in charge of indigenous peoples and started to receive international support. One of SAE's first activities in 1994 was a *Censo Indígena* in the rural lowlands in seven departments (SAE/INE/Secretaría Nacional 1996).

Major “second generation” reforms – complementing the structural adjustment policies of the mid 1980s (Albó 2008) – included the decentralization of government responsibilities and of 20% of all central government funds to the nascent municipalities, creating for the first time full-fledged local governments (*Ley de Participación Popular* 1551/1994 and *Ley de Descentralización Administrativa* 1654/ 1995, which also abolished the regional development corporations). Local people's existing organizations were to be involved and formally recognized as *Organizaciones Territoriales de Base* (OTBs).¹¹ Also still in 1994, Law 1565 reformed the national education system which was to become universal, democratic, intercultural and bilingual. In mid 1996, the new *Ley Forestal* (1700/1996)¹² both reformed the concession system and for the first time created various mechanisms for indigenous and other local people to utilize forest resources. Nevertheless, the approach has been characterized as a “timber-market

11 CIDOB proposals to create *Municipios Indígenas* were not accommodated in the 1999 *Ley de Municipalidades*. Until the 2009 Constitution, the only options for limited indigenous self-government were *Distritos Municipales Indígenas* within a municipality, and their associations (*mancomunidades*).

12 In discussion since 1991, since 1992 with support from the USAID-financed BOLFOR (Bolivia Sustainable Forest Management Project, see Putz et al. 2004) which until early 2009 also supported its implementation (total funds US\$ 42 million; Los Tiempos 15.02.09).

oriented” and overly regulated model of community forestry (Pacheco 2007). When the new agrarian reform law, which after an initiative by the World Bank had also been negotiated for four years, did not progress, in August-September 1996 CIDOB organized a second indigenous *Marcha por Tierra, Derechos Políticos y Desarrollo* from Samaipata to La Paz, initially together with the peasant and colonist federations. As a result, the so-called *Ley INR* (1715/1996) was finally passed and introduced procedures and targets for the regularization (*saneamiento* or “cleansing”) of all land rights, including those to TCOs, stressing the need to demonstrate the *Función Económica Social* (FES) of demanded land.¹³ Taken together, the state reforms of the mid 1990s led to important “changes in incentive and opportunity structures” (Lucero 2006: 46) for indigenous mobilization.

The following government by ex-dictator Banzer (1997-2001), while paying lip service to indigenous and donor interests by creating a *Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios* (VAIPO),¹⁴ did little to advance the still incipient implementation of the reforms. In 1999 it even issued a decree (DS 25532 *Decreto de las Barracas*) which would have permitted large private rubber estates in the north covering approx. 3.5 million ha to be converted first into concessions, later into property (Ruiz 2005: 68). This decree had to be withdrawn after a third *Marcha Indígena y Campesina por la Tierra, el Territorio y los Recursos Naturales* in June-July 2000 which this time started in Pando and also propelled DS 25848 which, in recognition of the mainly extractive regional economy, stipulated a minimum size of 500 ha for peasant land holdings in northern Bolivia.

From late 2000 on, Bolivia entered into a period of nation-wide mobilizations around natural resource issues (water, gas), but also increasing demands for a Constitutional Assembly to “refound the country”,¹⁵ which led to the resignation of President Sánchez de Lozada in October 2003. His vice-president Mesa became president and created a *Ministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios* (MAIPO). He organized a referendum on gas as well as municipal elections, based on a new law ending the monopoly of political parties and allowing indigenous and citizen groups to present candidates, but resigned after increasing protests in mid 2005.

13 Sixteen new demands were to be titled within 10 months; the previous eight territories were converted into TCOs. Until mid 2005, the implementation of *Ley INRA* was supported by a US\$ 23.7 million World Bank loan for the National Land Administration Project (Griffith 2000; World Bank 2006).

14 In 2000, VAIPO was transformed into the *Ministerio de Asuntos Campesinos, Pueblos Indígenas y Originarios* (MACPIO), and Quechua, Aymara and Tupi-Guarani were recognised, along with Spanish, as official languages (*Ley de los Idiomas Oficiales*).

15 This mobilization included a fourth *Marcha por la Soberanía Popular, el Territorio y los Recursos Naturales* in May 2002 (see Romero Bonifaz 2005).

The December 2005 elections brought a landslide victory (54%) for Bolivia's first indigenous president Evo Morales, whose political career began as leader of the Chapare coca farmers in the 1980s. He formed the current *Gobierno de la Revolución Democrática y Cultural*,¹⁶ restructured ministries (MAIPO was seen as anachronistic and abolished) and in May 2006 nationalized the gas industry. In July 2006, the four lowland departments, whose regionalistic movements had started to collaborate in early 2003, voted in favor of increased autonomy in regional referendums.¹⁷ After the fifth indigenous and peasant march,¹⁸ the Agrarian Reform Law was modified in November 2006, mainly to simplify procedures and speed up the process. By the end of 2008, almost 18.4 million ha were reported as titled since 2006, in comparison to 9.3 million ha between 1996 and 2005.¹⁹ The titled TCO area increased by 6,856,408 ha, reaching a total of 12,618,466 ha (Viceministerio 2008).

The *Asamblea Constituyente* from August 2006 on, in a complicated and controversial process,²⁰ came up with a proposal for a new constitution in December 2007, containing far-reaching changes in the country's division in now autonomous departments, provinces/regions, municipalities and *territorios indígenas originarios campesinos*. Including last changes in October 2008 after increasingly violent mobilizations in the lowland departments, the constitution was passed in a referendum in January 2009. Its implementation is creating new challenges for both the Bolivian government and the indigenous movement. Discussions and drafting of legislation have started on the considerable adjustments that will become necessary in Bolivia's territorial administration, including boundary changes of administrative units (Albó & Romero 2009; Colque 2009; Ministerio de Autonomía 2009). However, the July 2009 *Decreto Supremo para las Autonomías Indígenas*, while speeding up the process of conversion of municipalities into *Autonomías Indígenas* before the December 2009 national elections, fixes municipal boundaries and recognizes property rights which will create problems for TCOs that are located in several municipalities and covered by competing land and natural resource claims, as is the case in Iturrealde with the Tacana TCOs.

16 The government's vision of “refounding Bolivia” is expressed in the National Development Plan “*Bolivia Digna, Soberana, Productiva y Democrática para Vivir Bien*” (Decreto Supremo 29.272, September 2007; see Casabona 2008).

17 Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija, jointly called the *Media Luna* (see Assies 2006).

18 *Marcha Indígena y Campesina por la Reconducción Comunitaria de la Reforma Agraria y la Modificación de la Ley INRA*.

19 Actually, these figures include the identification of 7.7 million ha (vs. previously only about 110,000 ha) of public lands (*tierras fiscales*) for future distribution, i.e. still untitled lands.

20 Including a sixth indigenous march to the capital Sucre, organized by CIDOB in July 2007.

4. Changes in the regional context since 1990

Before reconstructing the process and impacts of Tacana mobilization, the major changes resulting from the new national policies at the regional and local levels will be outlined as context, focusing on environmental issues (protected areas and forestry), decentralization and social policies, and large development schemes. The impacts of *Ley INRA* are directly related to the process of Tacana mobilization around the TCO demands and will be addressed in the next chapter.

The population of Iturralde is still rather low (about 15,000 people in 2007), with an overall density of 0.35/km², concentrated in the south of the province (see Table 1). Nevertheless, its average growth rate of 3.7% (1991-2007) is far above the national average (Ibarguen 2008: 13). Transportation services have improved since the 1980s, with at least weekly bus services all the way from Ixiamas to La Paz (since 1996) and transport between San Buenaventura and Ixiamas several times a day. However, local transport is still comparatively expensive, and the main users of the road continue to be timber trucks (Ibarguen 2008: 21-22). Central government funds and local revenues for the two municipalities have increased with decentralization, but their infrastructure and services are still quite limited. Ixiamas was a founding member of the *Mancomunidad de Municipios del Norte Paceño Tropical* in 2001 (San Buenaventura joined only in 2006 but withdrew again in 2009), an attempt by up to nine municipalities to join forces in regional development, with so far limited success (Bueno Saavedra 2009).

Administrative area	Area	Population		Budget (Bs.)		Basic services at household level (2001)	
	km ²	1992	2007	1996	2008	Electricity	Water
San Buenaventura	2,781	4,608	7,512	489,147	4,014,116	41%	80%
Ixiamas	40,034	3,618	7,456	1,503,378	3,433,900	24%	40%
Province of Iturralde	42,815	8,226	14,968	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.

Table 1. The Province of Iturralde and its Municipalities.

Sources: Data in Gobierno (2008); Evaluación Ambiental (2004, Cuadro 1, p. 158); Ibarguen (2008: 11, Cuadro 1, p. 12).

4.1 Protected areas and tourism

A major change in the region since the 1980s has been the creation of protected areas, which, according to Bolivian legislation, can accommodate overlaps with indigenous territories and strive for active involvement of the local population in their preparation and management. In 1990, a “Rapid Biological Assessment Alto Madidi” by Conservation International (CI) started the process of structured data gathering and local consultations to support the creation of the Madidi National Park which culminated in September 1995 (see Figure 1).²¹ The park covers an area of almost 1.9 million ha and a range of ecosystems from the Andean highlands and intermontane valleys to lowland forests and savannas. Its *Area Natural de Manejo Integrado* (ANMI) includes 25 highland communities in the area of Apolo (total population about 2,900) and San José de Uchupiamonas (population about 600). Other villages are located in the surroundings of the park.

Initially, there was resistance among local people against the persecution of illegal logging, which was rampant along the Tuichi river until at least 1997. Opposition to the park continues in the area of Apolo until today which has delayed the development and approval of the park’s management plan in its heterogeneous *Comité de Gestión*. In 1997, the park opened its office in San Buenaventura and has since doubled the number of guards to about 30 (annual government budget of about US\$ 400,000). Since 1998, SERNAP has been in charge of the management of the Madidi Park. The NGOs involved in its creation and/or management include, besides CI, the Bolivian NGO Eco Bolivia (founded in 1991), CARE (since 1994) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). WCS had been involved since 1991, but since 1999 has been operating through large mainly USAID-financed programs with a broad landscape and trans-boundary approach.²² These NGOs have become important actors in the region.

The region of Rurrenabaque and San Buenaventura, due its scenic location at the transition from the last chains of the Andes to the Amazon plains, has for a long time attracted tourists and even in the 1980s had a few simple hotels. Since the creation of the protected areas, tourism has increased dramatically. By the late 1990s, there were

21 The Madidi National Park was promoted on France 3 in the documentary “The Forest of the Tacana” the same year. In March 2000, it was featured in National Geographic (Kemper 2000), and in 2008 in the first Spanish language issue of the National Geographic Traveler.

22 In the context of the “Greater Madidi Landscape Conservation Area” (95,000 km², see Wildlife Conservation Society 2007a; 2007b; Painter et al. 2008), the Madidi National Park articulates with the neighboring Bahuaja-Sonene National Park in Peru (created in 1990, see MacQuarrie 2001), the highland protected area Apolobamba (before Ulla Ulla) and the Pilon Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Indigenous Territory in the Beni Department (created in 1992 as a result of the 1990 march, almost 400,000 ha titled as TCO in 1997; Riverstone 2004 and Table 3).

a number of travel agencies catering to backpackers (estimate: about 3,000 tourists in 1997), without much coordination nor benefits for local people or the protected areas. By 2005, the agencies had multiplied and diversified, and the annual number of tourists were said to have increased to up to 38,000, mainly foreigners (*La Razón*, 14.7.2005; figures for 2008 were around 25,000), generating about US\$ 5 million per year.²³ The Municipality of Rurrenabaque created an information center and elaborated standards for responsible tourism, with support from the German development worker service *Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst* (DED) which had been active in the region since the 1990s.

While the major attraction of these “jungle tours” continues to be wildlife, and about 70-75% of the tourists actually go to the Beni savannas to see caimans and birds, the remainder visits the forests of the Pilon Lajas and Madidi protected areas. Also, some companies explicitly cater to tourists interested in “cultural experiences”, like Shayna Tours (a Tacana word) in Rurrenabaque which in 2004 offered cultural tours to Tumupasa, including “authentic Tacana language listening directly from mouth of native ones”.²⁴ This “market niche” since the early 1990s has been increasingly tapped also by indigenous community-operated ecotourism enterprises, the pioneer being San José de Uchupiamonas (see chapter 5.1).

4.2 Decentralization, participation, education and culture

The impact of the 1994 Popular Participation Law was immediate in the region, even at community level, despite the often rather strained relationships between the two municipal governments and CIPTA because of the TCO demands. In July 1994, the first OTB was installed in Tumupasa, where the four, later five neighborhoods were converted into OTBs – instead of the entire system of traditional local authorities which would have been an option to strengthen its functioning. However, the OTB concept seems to have been little understood and useful. There are several entries in local records that the OTBs did not function, and they seemed to serve mainly to mobilize labor for communal projects (as the neighborhoods did before) or, in 2003 and again in 2008, as an innovative way to organize the dance groups for Tumupasa’s patron’s festival for which individual sponsors were increasingly difficult to find.

The possibility for *distritación indígena*, i.e. the recognition of indigenous self-managing subdivisions within a municipality, has been discussed since 1996. Although there was an early decision to strive for recognition as indigenous peoples in Tumu-

23 Between 1999 and 2004, the annual average was US\$ 1.38 million (Fleck et al. 2006a: 13).

24 <<http://www.shaynatours.com/tacana.php>> (21.01.2009).

pasa, San José and Tahua (the three *cantones* in San Buenaventura),²⁵ and proposals were developed for both San Buenaventura and Ixiamas after 2003 with the idea to join two *Distritos Municipales Indígenas* in a *Mancomunidad* to overcome the current separation by municipal boundaries (CIPTA 2008a; Knothe 2004: 93), they were never implemented. Nevertheless, at least since 1996 there were annual visits to Tumupasa by the *Alcalde* and/or the *Comité de Vigilancia* of San Buenaventura to discuss annual municipal work plans and budgets (POA) and their implementation. Both the committees in San Buenaventura and Ixiamas have Tacana members which has led to the inclusion of community proposals into the POAs (CIPTA 2007). The decentralization of central government funds continues to work: in early 2006, there were immediate discussions in Tumupasa about what to finance with the increases in the annual budget resulting from the new mineral tax IDH (*Impuesto Directo a los Hidrocarburos*). As a result, there are some improvements in local infrastructure.

Tacana representatives also participated in the still rather sporadic activities with regard to bilingual-intercultural education in the lowlands, e.g. an August 1996 workshop on alphabets for Amazonian indigenous languages or scholarships for bilingual teacher training courses. From 1997 on, these activities were supported by CEAM (*Consejo Educativo Amazónico Multiétnico*), one of the indigenous councils created to ensure popular participation in the educational reform process, based in CIDOB, and later PEIB-TB (*Programa de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe para Tierras Bajas*) which started as a program of international cooperation but became a government policy in the early 2000s. In October 2004, eight Tacana participated in a workshop on the Tacana alphabet in La Paz. However, at the same time, local teachers trained in Trinidad or Rurrenabaque who could have implemented bilingual education for various reasons could not get positions at Tumupasa's schools.²⁶ After yet another hiatus due to the changes in government in 2005, resulting in the abolition of the *Dirección de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe* in the Ministry of Education and the discussion about a new Law of Education (Zavala 2007), in September 2007 PEIB-TB organized a workshop in Tumupasa to finalize the Tacana alphabet (Suárez 2007)²⁷ and another one on popular participation in (not yet existing) bilingual-intercultural education in November 2008.

25 “Consenso de hacernos reconocer como pueblo indígena” (LdA Corregimiento Tumupasa, 12/1996).

26 The reasons given to me in 2008 ranged from bureaucratic problems (lack of recognition of teachers' diplomas received in the Department of Beni in the Department of La Paz) to the highly formalized selection process and interventions of the teachers' unions favoring highland candidates to still existing rejection of or at least lack of interest in bilingual-intercultural education in Tumupasa. As a result, at each of the two large schools, there was only one local teacher.

27 In the process, it was e.g. decided to use “k” instead of “c”, i.e. “Takana”.

Tacana culture in general has received more government and public recognition during the last 20 years. In December 1997, for example, La Paz hosted a *Semana de la Diversidad Étnica y Cultural Amazónica del Norte de La Paz* where a delegation from Tumupasa demonstrated music, dances, crafts and house construction. In 2004, with support from PRAIA, a regional program for indigenous peoples in the Amazon, musicians from Tumupasa produced a CD which was launched in La Paz. Nevertheless, and despite CIPTA's various initiatives to be discussed in the next part, according to my observations both in 1998 and 2008, in daily life, the Tacana language, but also other aspects of "traditional" Tacana culture, continue to be of rather limited and probably even declining importance.

4.3 Forestry

The 1990 *Pausa Ecológica Histórica* (DS 22407) and the indigenous march led to the withdrawal of six logging concessions totaling almost 937,000 ha in Iturralde and the creation of the *Reserva Forestal de Inmovilización Abel Iturralde* in December 1991 (DS 23022). However, the other companies continued operating in the area, one even receiving permission to install a sawmill in Tumupasa. The communities were interested in avoiding negative impacts in their forest areas, but also in jobs and/or capturing at least some *regalias* from timber extraction which were used e.g. for the construction of the *colegio* and other public buildings in Tumupasa and Napashi. Until the new Forestry Law in 1996, which was anticipated with some concern in the province, there was a boom of illegal logging by groups of chainsaw operators (*cuarteros*) which despite many complaints about outsiders (mainly colonists) also involved indigenous people who in the process increasingly acquired chainsaws.²⁸ In August 1994, an association of chainsaw operators was founded in Tumupasa and got involved in logging along the Tuichi river.

As soon as the new Forestry Law was passed, these associations tried to convert themselves into the prescribed ASLs (*Agrupaciones Sociales del Lugar*) to get legal access (concessions) to the to-be-created *Áreas de Reserva Forestal Municipal*, at least 20% of the public lands in a municipality. In the meantime, there was constant pressure on local and regional authorities to continue what was declared an indispensable local income-generating activity. In San Buenaventura, the newly created municipal forestry unit with support from BOLFOR in August 1998 attempted to create forest areas for the ASLs but realized that they overlapped with the TCO Tacana demand and thus had to be negotiated with CIPTA. Even so, the municipal income from forestry increased

28 Since the early 1990s, the LdA have registered an increasing number of timber-related problems (debts, theft etc.), both among local people, between locals and outsiders, and between outsiders.

considerably. In November 2002, an agreement was reached on a 7,900 ha municipal forest area, but by 2008 the two non-indigenous ASLs in this area had stopped operation. In Tumupasa, two ASLs (APIAT and AGROFORT) were founded in 1996 and 1997, respectively, but only approved by San Buenaventura in November 1998. However, as ASLs they could not operate within a TCO. After extended negotiations and trips to La Paz, in June 2001, APIAT and AGROFORT were recognized as indigenous forest user groups within their co-owned indigenous territory (still without title at the time). The same applied for the Tacana ASLs in Ixiamas where a municipal forest reserve of over 115,000 ha had been approved by the ministry in 2001 and by 2008, seven non-Tacana ASLs were active, outside the TCO. The experiences of some of the indigenous forest user groups will be discussed in the next part.

Parallel to these developments, the authorities of Tumupasa signed contracts with two sawmill owners who in 1998 installed their equipment just below the village center, supposedly for wood from *chaqueo* (land clearing for fields). When I visited Tumupasa in 2008, these two sawmills had been withdrawn, but three new and even larger sawmills were in operation, all owned and operated by outsiders.²⁹ Forestry had become an important income source also for the local administration (*Agencia Cantonal*).

On the other hand, by the end of the “voluntary conversion” period prescribed by the new Forestry Law, in July 1997 nine concessions totaling almost 400,000 ha remained in Iturrealde, five of them overlapping by more than 200,000 ha with the Tacana land claim. By 2008, six concessions covering 248,307 ha remained (Ibarguen 2008: 20 and Cuadro 7, p. 47). In November 2008, the head of CIDOB voiced optimism that the TCO Tacana could be enlarged by including two reverted timber concessions, but later that month rumors from La Paz had it that the government was more interested in designating these areas for its clientele, highland colonists, in the context of the revitalization of the agroindustrial complex idea (see chapter 4.4). This unresolved situation led to a clash between colonists and the Tacana in the area of Tumupasa in September 2009 (*La Razón*, 11.09.09).

4.4 *Business as usual?*

The reform processes described above, despite considerable confusion at community and municipal levels about new roles and responsibilities, definitely brought

29 This is in line with a general trend: “Over the last few years, the number of installed sawmills increased considerably in all traditional timber exploitation areas. [...] None of these locally installed sawmills have forest concessions. They all buy timber from indigenous and farmers’ communities, private landowners, including small farmers, and ASLs” (Benneker 2008: 101). In Iturrealde, by 2008, there were a total of 22 sawmills, without counting the mobile ones (Ibarguen 2008: 21).

“government closer to the people” and opened possibilities for local, and especially indigenous, participation in decision-making and benefits. However, at the same time, the top-down designed large-scale development projects continued to receive support by different governments, also the current government of President Morales (Ribera Arismendi 2008).

Road construction and improvement has continued to be a permanent priority, both of the national government and the *Prefectura del Departamento de La Paz*, since in 1990 the connection San Buenaventura-Cobija via Ixiamas had been evaluated as economically viable. In 1995, the *Brigada Paceña* organized a *Caravana* to Puerto Heath in the north of the province, but a study by the Conservation Strategy Fund (CSF) documented that this road would lead to a large financial loss (Fleck et al. 2006b; Reid 1999). In 2000, Bolivia joined IIRSA, the 12-country *Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana*, promoted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). Since what is now called *Corredor Norte* (La Paz-Yucumo-Riberalta-Cobija-Rio Branco,³⁰ with a Western branch via Ixiamas) became part of IIRSA, studies, consultations and financial resources have increased. In late 2004, after a strategic environmental assessment (IADB n.d.), IADB announced a US\$ 33 million loan. A second round of public consultations took place in mid 2005, also involving indigenous organizations. In 2007, an independent evaluation of the proposal to pave the *Corredor Norte*, especially the part from Ixiamas to El Chivé, came to the conclusion that these would not be economically sound investments, even without considering impacts on TCOs and protected areas (Fleck, Painter & Amend 2007). Nevertheless, in July 2008, the Presidents of Bolivia, Brazil and Venezuela met in Riberalta and signed an agreement to pave the eastern branch of the *Corredor Norte* (which does not affect Iturrealde) with Venezuelan and Brazilian loans totalling US\$ 530 million (www.iirsa.org, 03.02.2009).

Roads also continue to be a direct threat for the Madidi Park, especially the connection between Apolo and Ixiamas which has been promoted since the mid 1990s, the main hidden agenda being access to timber resources (Fleck et al. 2006b; Ribera Arismendi 2008; Salinas 2007). In this context, in 1996, Tumupasa agreed to road construction to and demanded by San José (supported by the *Prefectura*), although it cut across the park, did not have the necessary environmental impact assessment and ended up affecting local water and energy supplies.

Oil exploration continued in 1991 (Petrosur/Shell) and 1995 (Total) in the Yariapu area (where Tumupasa was founded), but did not yield economically interesting

30 Cobija can now be reached by bus in 48 hours from La Paz via Rurrenabaque and El Chorro during the dry season.

results (Silva et al. 2002: 86). In 1996, there was oil exploration by CGG and Texaco in the Beu region, and in 2000 by Repsol in the Tuichi river valley, i.e. inside the Madidi Park, where Petrobras got a concession at Río Hondo in 2004 as well. In the framework of Bolivian-Venezuelan cooperation in the energy sector since early 2006, in July 2008, Law 3911 authorized a contract for oil exploration and exploitation in the north of La Paz, including the *area reservada* Madidi.³¹ In recent years, gold mining along the Tequeje river has become an additional environmental threat.

Not only spontaneous, but also directed colonization continued in the region. In 1999, INRA settled 127 families from Potosí in the northwest of Ixiamas who suffered from lack of infrastructure (Silva et al. 2002: 92). In November 2006, after lobbying by the *Prefectura* of La Paz, Law 3546 declared what is now called the *Complejo Agro-industrial de San Buenaventura* (CAISB) a national priority – with an explicit return to the *Marcha al Norte* slogan. Besides sugar production, the proposal now includes biofuel (ethanol) and alcohol production as well as oil and biodiesel from oil palms, all promoted as “fuentes de energía renovable y compatible dentro del marco de la producción ecológicamente sostenible” (Art. 1). Plantations shall be on *tierras fiscales*, and local institutions and organizations, including those of indigenous peoples and colonists, are to be involved in the management. In March 2008, an ex-prefect of La Paz was nominated CAISB manager, but until the end of the year not much was happening on the ground, mainly due to lack of funds (Ribera Arismendi 2008).

Finally, the Bala dam project had been revitalized as “national priority” through a highly controversial law during the Banzer government (*Ley* 1887/1998). Its economic viability was also evaluated negatively by CSF in 1999 (Reid 1999), and the project seemed to be permanently shelved. Nevertheless, in July 2007, arguing that the country was facing a “situation of energetic uncertainty”, Decree 29191 once again declared the “aprovechamiento” of the Beni river basin for the hydroelectric project “El Bala” to be of “interés y prioridad nacional”.

After in some cases half a century of propaganda and projects but no implementation, it is hard to believe that any of these initiatives will really take off. However, it is striking that all of them were reconfirmed, even through laws, during the first years of the Morales government which presents itself and is seen by CIDOB as an ally of the lowland indigenous peoples. Also, at least in the case of road construction and oil exploration, funds seem to be available already, and in late 2008 leaders from San José de Uchupiamonas voiced their serious concerns with regard to the latter’s

31 Contract between the Bolivian oil company YPFB and Petroandina, a “mixed” company formed by YPFB (60%) and Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima (PDVSA, 40%). This collaboration had been prepared since January 2006 for oil exploration in the North of La Paz.

implications for the park and their tourism enterprise (see also Finer et al. 2008). However, until recently, not much criticism has been heard from the regional and national level lowland indigenous organizations, apparently because their international NGO supporters wanted to avoid conflicts with the government (Esther Lopez, pers. comm. June 2009).

5. The processes and impacts of Tacana mobilization

Indigenous mobilization is related to demography (i.e. the “constituency” which can be mobilized), although obviously the numbers depend on the criteria used and can thus change rather rapidly. In the 1980s, when no ethnically differentiated census data were available, the Summer Institute of Linguistic (SIL)’s estimate ranged between 3,000 and 5,000 (Ottaviano & Ottaviano 1980). According to my 1987 census, Tumupasa (including the nascent community of Napashi or San Silvestre), accepted in the region as the contemporary center of Tacana culture, had only 7% newly arrived “outsiders” in its population of 800. Taking language as the most immediate identifier, Tumupasa also had the highest concentration of Tacana speakers in the region.³² Their numbers were lower in Ixiamas and San José,³³ but Tacana speakers were also present in Tahua and other smaller communities in the area of Ixiamas and the Beni river. However, considering the broader criterion of (often mixed) Tacana descent (still noticeable in typical last names like Amutari, Marupa or Queteguari) and including the areas in northern Bolivia where Tacana had ended up during the rubber boom, the Tacana population at the time could easily reach the SIL estimate (Wentzel 1991).

The lowland indigenous census in 1994 resulted in a total count of 5,058 Tacana (3,109 in La Paz, 1,469 in Beni and 480 in Pando), at a time when some communities even in Iturralde were hesitant to self-identify as Tacana (SAE/INE/Secretaría Nacional 1996: 21).³⁴ Correcting for this, in 1996, Chiovoloni estimated a total of 6,050 (Chiovoloni 1996: 12). The 2001 National Census for the first time eliminated the category of *mestizo*, leaving only the options of *blanco* and *indígena*. The results, disaggregated at the level of ethnic group only for persons aged 15 or more years who identified themselves with a certain *pueblo originario*, counted 3,452 adult

32 The local, not exactly flattering label for Tacana speakers was *Tacanistas*.

33 San José de Uchupiamonas, which was still monolingual Tacana in the early 1800s, had almost disappeared in the late 19th century and persisted only because of its logistical importance and due to the stability provided by the permanence of the same Franciscan friar there for over 50 years. He congregated a mixed population of lowland, intermontane, and even highland origin and introduced Quechua as the lingua franca. The origin of the few families of Tacana descent remaining in San José can be traced to Tumupasa.

34 The question asked was direct: “A qué pueblo indígena pertenece?” (Herrera Sarmiento 2003: 53).

Tacana, 2,475 rural and 977 urban (Molina Barrios 2005: 40). The highest most recent extrapolation is 9,461 (Romero Bonifaz 2005: 51) which can still not be considered an “explosion” in the number of Tacana.³⁵

5.1 Province of Iturralde, Department of La Paz

5.1.1 Foundation and consolidation of CIPTA, the Consejo Indígena del Pueblo Tacana

A recent CIPTA-publication describes the beginning of the organization as follows:³⁶

A partir de 1990, algunos jóvenes tacanas vimos la necesidad de organizar mejor a las comunidades, de revalorizar las tradiciones culturales y de defender el territorio que históricamente habíamos ocupado [...] Varios de nosotros participamos en la Marcha Indígena (CIPTA 2007: 8).

After the 1990 march, there was no immediate follow-up, however, and the decrees created indigenous territories only in the Beni Department. Nevertheless, in 1990 an ILO-supported project of the Ministry of Agriculture focusing on land ten-ure issues in several Tacana communities may have contributed to their mobilization (Romero Bedregal 1990). According to local records, in November 1991, there was a first meeting of *comunidades Tacana* (San José de Uchupiamonas, Tahua, its off-spring Santa Rosa de Maravillas, Santa Ana and possibly some of the communities located on the Beni river) in Tumupasa (see Figure 1 and Table 2).³⁷ However, CIPTA seems to have been officially founded only at a second meeting of eight communities in December 1992, again in Tumupasa,³⁸ brought together with support from CPIB (*Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni*), the Beni Department’s regional indigenous organization affiliated with CIDOB. The first President was Robert Cartagena from Tumupasa. In May 1993, a third CIPTA meeting in Tumupasa involved CIDOB, CIRABO

35 Herrera e.g. stresses “el hecho que los tacana - inexistentes hace 15 años – se hayan convertido en la actualidad, en el grupo étnico más numeroso del norte amazónico” (Herrera 2009:12).

36 The focus will be on Tumupasa and on the early years which were vital for the survival of the movement but are not well documented, so that reconstruction had to be based on a variety of sources, starting from the available LdA for this time period both of the *Corregimiento in Tumupasa* and of CIPTA which I reviewed both in 1998 and 2008 and which will not be cited for each event to save space. During these visits, unfortunately, due to their absence, I was unable to conduct interviews with the first leaders of CIPTA on the process. Some inconsistencies remain, especially with regard to the process of expansion of CIPTA member communities.

37 Previous attempts that year by colonists to (re-)organize a peasant union (*central*) in Tumupasa had been rejected, apparently because of the political implications: the “ethnic” way of organizing started to seem more appropriate and useful (Yolanda Málaga, Tumupasa, letter 6/1991). Stocks (n.d.) describes strikingly similar processes among the Cocamilla.

38 Tumupasa and neighboring Napashi, San José de Uchupiamonas, three of the four communities in the area of Ixiamas, and Buena Vista and Altamarani on the Beni river.

(*Central Indígena de la Región Amazónica de Bolivia*), the northern Bolivian regional indigenous organization (see 5.2) and a support organization from La Paz. In November 1993 CIPTA received its legal personality from the Ministry of Agriculture.³⁹

Nevertheless, a report by the directorate at the next larger meeting in March 1995 (*Primera Asamblea del Pueblo Tacana*) states that for lack of infrastructure and funds, “no se hizo nada como organización”. Now, the one to five representatives from nine communities (of 14 said to be members), brought together with support from SAE and CPIB, decided to “renovate” CIPTA, elected a new directorate (President Hermán Chuqui from Maravillas, Vice-President Celín Quenevo from Napashi).⁴⁰ However, although all meetings had so far taken place in Tumupasa, there was little personal involvement from the “center of Tacana culture” in CIPTA, and the organization still had to counter “personas que siguen murmurando de que ser indígena es un retroceso” (LdA CIPTA 04.09.1995).

During 1995, CIPTA received support from Eco Bolivia which had been active in local consultations on the creation of the Madidi Park but soon made itself increasingly unpopular due to lack of delivery and transparency.⁴¹ Also, SAE created a

39 *The Resolución Ministerial MACA 0118/93* refers to CIPTA as the *Consejo Indígena de los Pueblos Tacanas*. Three of the participants of the first meeting in 1991, San José de Uchupiamonas, Tahua and Santa Ana, seem to have left CIPTA already at this moment: San José, since 1992, was busy developing its ecotourism enterprise. Also, it now (realistically) self-identifies as Quechua-Tacana community. After its land titling process as *comunidad campesina* (23,034 ha) was almost completed, in July 2002, San José demanded and in May 2004 received title to its own TCO (210,000 ha) which completely – but due to the small population of 630 persons and considerable revenues from tourism so far rather harmoniously – overlaps with the Madidi Park’s management zone (see Figure 1). In December 2007, San José joined CPILAP (*Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz*), but by November 2008 did not seem to be very satisfied with the performance of this regional organization. The community rather seems to go its own “indigenous” way. Tahua was at the beginning actually included in the TCO demand but not interested. Later (June 2002), it protested against the TCO Tacana which allegedly was violating its rights as “originarios e indígenas del territorio de Ixiamas”. Like Santa Ana, which most Tacana had left after the community was “taken over” in 1990 by colonists from Caranavi (whom in 1986 they had invited as a strategy to get land titles), Tahua was registered and titled as *comunidad campesina* outside of the TCO Tacana.

40 After this meeting, CIPTA started its own *Libro de Actas* (LdA) which better allows to reconstruct its activities.

41 Ana María Ruiz, the founder of Eco Bolivia, presents her view of things as follows, claiming an important role in the creation of CIPTA: “The consultation I carried out in 1992 with almost all the communities in the area resulted in 100% community support for the creation of the Madidi National Park” (Ruiz 2003: 11). “The Tacana population had remained semi-nomadic until the arrival of the lumber companies in the 1980s. [...] Eco Bolivia implemented an intense process of empowerment [...] that resulted in the first congress of [...] CIPTA. The organization was introduced to potential funders, and the leaders were trained in the preparation and implementation of projects, which are important steps towards the goal of self-management” (Ruiz 2003: 12-13).

permanent representation in the region. Both institutions were involved in pilot land titling activities in five communities. With support from DED, since September 1995 a more frequent exchange was established with Tacana communities in the area of Rurrenabaque. The next meeting in April 1996 in Tumupasa, supported by both SAE and CIDOB, brought together almost 40 participants from 11 communities and was

Date	Place	Type of meeting	Number of participants		President
			Communities	Persons	
11/1991	Tumupasa	Meeting	5 (+?)	?	?
12/1992	Tumupasa	Meeting	8	?	Robert Cartagena
5/1993	Tumupasa	Meeting	?	?	Robert Cartagena
3/1995	Tumupasa	1. Asamblea	9 (of 14?)	?	Hermán Chuqui
4/1996	Tumupasa	Meeting	11	< 40	Hermán Chuqui
4/1997	Tumupasa	2. Congreso	12 + 6 candidates (14 members)	ca. 50	Celín Quenevo
6/1998	Tumupasa	(3.?) Magna Asamblea	13	?	Celín Quenevo
4/1999	Ixiamas	4. Gran Asamblea	? (28 members)	?	Celín Quenevo
6/2001	Buena Vista	5. Asamblea	? (+ 4 TCO II)	?	Celín Quenevo
7/2002	Carmen del Emero	Asamblea Consultiva	?	?	(no election)
9/2003	San Miguel de Bala	6. Gran Asamblea	?	?	Celín Quenevo
12/2005	Villa Fátima	Asamblea Consultativa	?	?	(no election)
12/2006	Santa Rosa de Maravilla	Asamblea Consultativa	?	?	(no election)
4/2008	Macahua	7. Gran Asamblea	22	ca. 160	Jesús Leal

Table 2. Major CIPTA Meetings between 1991 and 2008.

Sources: *Libros de Actas Corregimiento Tumupasa* and CIPTA; CIPTA (2007; 2008a).

For 2008, Tacana participants only are counted since there were many guests from different institutions.

followed by a *Diagnóstico Participativo* on natural resource management in ten communities (Chiovoloni 1996). From 1996 on, a GEF (Global Environmental Facility) funded project contributed the construction of CIPTA's office in Tumupasa and four sets of equipment for radiocommunication with member communities, but seems to have been difficult to manage. CIPTA leaders also started to actively visit member communities in the area of Ixiamas and along the Beni river, and it was decided that all would apply for a change in status from *comunidad campesina* to *comunidad indígena* to be eligible for a TCO under the new Ley INRA, a process which turned out to be rather complicated. They also established first contacts with communities in Pando. For unknown reasons, CIPTA did not participate in the second indigenous march in September 1996, and the Tacana territorial demands in Iturralde were not included in the resulting government commitments.

In February 1997, during another SAE-sponsored workshop on popular participation with all by now twelve CIPTA member communities, CIMTA (*Consejo Indígena de Mujeres Tacana*) was founded as an umbrella organization for Tacana women (first president: Neide Cartagena). For a long time, it had difficulties becoming active, despite some external support. Carmen del Emero and Esperanza del Enapurera, the first two communities located further north in the province, were integrated into CIPTA and CIMTA.⁴² However, at the same time, local records note that the *corregidor* of Tumupasa “desconoce y no está de acuerdo” with its classification as *comunidad indígena*, and in a village meeting in April 1997 CIPTA was critized and Tumupasa's continued participation made dependent on tangible benefits (*desarrollo, progreso*). Nevertheless, in June 1997, all authorities in Tumupasa agreed to be part of the TCO demand, and in November 1998 they proudly invited the public as *El Pueblo Tacana de Tumupasa* for the inauguration of their micro-hydropower plant, printing a song with reference to the *cristianocuana* on the invitation.

In April 1997, during what was called the *Segundo Congreso Indígena de los Pueblos Tacana* (about 50 participants from the member communities plus six new communities in the north),⁴³ the main topic was the TCO demand which was officially presented to INRA in July that year. Celín Quenevo was elected as president, and the new directorate consisted of one representative from each of the now 14 accepted member communities, which turned out to be rather unpractical. Later in 1997, it was decided that CIPTA could raise one *Boliviano*/month from each member family, and OCOR (*Organización de Comunidades Originarias de Rurrenabaque*) applied for affiliation.

42 According to the last version of CIPTA's *Estatuto Orgánico* (September 2003), additions to the founding member communities depend on unanimous decision by the *Asamblea Consultiva* or the *Gran Asamblea*.

43 Cachichira, Colombia, Santa Anita del Madidi, Barracón, Esperanza del Madidi, Osaqui.

In September 1997, Tumupasa hosted the founding meeting of CPILAP (*Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz*), the department-level federation of lowland indigenous organizations which at the time included the Mosetene (OPIM, founded in 1994) and Leco of Apolo (CIPLA, founded in 1997), joined the next year by the Leco of Larecaja (PILCOL).⁴⁴ The first president was, again, Robert Cartagena, who in 1998 moved on to CIDOB and was replaced by a Leco. After some initial leadership problems, the organization developed its first 2002-2006 Institutional Strategic Plan. During its fourth Grand Assembly in December 2007, it included self-organized San José de Uchupiamos, the Mosetene and Tsimane of the Pilón Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Indigenous Territory and the only Ese Ejja community in La Paz, approved a new 2008-2012 strategic plan and reelected the incumbent 2005-2007 president from CIPLA.

In 1998 CIPTA asked for the placement of a German DED development worker who, however, only arrived in mid 2000. During the appraisal, it was noted that CIPTA – with now 18 member communities and two in the process of joining – lacked core funding since the communities did not pay their contributions and project support was sporadic. Also, few members of the directorate besides the president were active, and with the exception of the partnership with CARE, the experiences with support NGOs and donor-funded projects had been difficult (Giesel, Coaquira & Terhorst 1998). This improved in 1999 with the start of more intensive WCS involvement in and around the Madidi Park. With regard to CIPTA, WCS support since 2000 has explicitly focused on “strengthening the organizational capabilities in natural resource management and conservation” (project title). The *IV Gran Asamblea de los Pueblos Tacana*⁴⁵ was held in Ixiamas in April 1999 (for the first time outside of Tumupasa), updated the internal regulations, discussed projects and reelected Celín Quenevo.⁴⁶ During 1999, a Danish prince visited Tumupasa as protector of CARE-Denmark, and two new communities joined CIPTA (Puerto Guzmán and Copacabana).

In May 2000, CIPTA opened its *Centro Cultural Tacana* (CCT) with exhibits and crafts sale in San Buenaventura, strategically located next to the mayor’s office on the plaza and managed mainly by CIMTA. Also in 2000, CIPTA with funds from CARE was able to contract its first advisors, a sociologist, an agronomist, and a forester. This

44 “Por la gran distancia del Norte de La Paz y los problemas de comunicación, los tacanas, lecos y mosetenes estábamos un tanto desligados de CIDOB y fundamos nuestras propias Centrales Indígenas recién en los años 90” (<www.cidob-bo.org/regionales/cpilap/historia.htm>; 23.01.2009).

45 Probably a scarcely documented *Magna Asamblea* in June 1998 with 13 communities had been counted as third.

46 From this assembly on, six participants each from by now 28 member communities were invited.

team, together with the WCS staff and a German DED development worker⁴⁷ greatly increased CIPTA's capacity to deal with the increasingly complex TCO titling procedure and the challenges of natural resource management. From June 2000 on, WCS under the coordination of Zulema Lehm, an experienced Bolivian anthropologist, supported the participatory development and after its approval in August 2001 the implementation of the *Estrategia de Desarrollo Sostenible de la TCO Tacana* (CIPTA & WCS 2002).

The next major *Asamblea* was held in Buena Vista in June 2001. Besides activity reports by CIPTA coordinators and partner institutions, the inclusion of the four Madre de Dios communities for whom CIPTA was demanding TCO Tacana II (Mercedes, Puerto Perez, El Tigre, Tres Hermanos) was formally announced, as well as the separation from OCOR. The *directorío* was reconfirmed and only complemented where members had left, and the regulations (*Estatuto Orgánico*) were specified to ensure equal participation of men and women among the six participants per village, a criterion largely fulfilled from here on.⁴⁸ In November 2001, the *Ayuda Obrera Suiza* (AOS, *Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk*) became a new CIPTA partner focusing on capacity development, also with regard to municipal issues. In November 2001, the second meeting of Tacana women reconfirmed CIMTA's importance, and the organization received its own legal personality. CIPTA during this time mainly focussed on the two TCO processes.⁴⁹ In August 2003, with AOS support, *Radio Tacana* started to broadcast from Tumupasa, however mainly in Spanish. At the time, about 20 agencies were supporting CIPTA, conducting trainings and workshops almost every week (Berth & Stender 2004; see Figure 8). At the following *Gran Asamblea* in San Miguel in September 2003, Celín Quenevo was reelected and the regulations were updated again, distinguishing between *Gran Asambleas* (for election purposes, every four years) and annual more informative *Asambleas Consultivas*. Also, a *Consejo de Corregidores* from all communities was created as supervisory body for the *directorío* which now consisted of nine members (only five of whom stayed on until the next grand assembly in 2008).

In July 2006, Adolfo Chávez Beyuma from Tumupasa was elected President of CIDOB, and two other Tacana from the north became secretaries of health and communication, increasing the visibility of the Tacana at the national level – and their

47 Heike Knothe was based in Tumupasa between June 2000 and July 2003 and worked with CIPTA and CIMTA (and initially OCOR) mainly on organizational development and gender issues (Knothe 2003; 2004).

48 Heike Knothe, pers. comm., May 2009.

49 In 2004, ACA (Amazon Conservation Association) started supporting work in and around the TCO Tacana II, contributing to its titling process e.g. by supporting CIPTA in mapping Brazil nut stands claimed and used by local people.

connection to the Morales government (CIDOB 2008).⁵⁰ In the meantime, CIPTA had also become an actor at the international level. After a preparatory visit in November 2005, organized by a Canadian volunteer, nine CIPTA members visited two First Nations in Quebec in November 2007, covering a variety of topics from community forestry to education, gender and crafts. This rather ambitious exchange supported by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency)’s Indigenous Peoples Partnership Project (IPPP) also included a visit by a Canadian delegation in Tumupasa but, as least so far, has not led to the envisaged joint follow-up activities (Conseil des Atikamekw et al. 2008). CIPTA representatives have also attended events in several Latin American countries.

In December 2006, CIPTA resumed its assembly tradition in Santa Rosa de Maravilla with many *informes* from leaders and partners. At the beginning of 2007, after the creation of a technical department in mid 2006, CIPTA and WCS started a new working relationship, with funds being administered and personnel being contracted directly by CIPTA. Also, to improve communication, the *directorío* visited all communities to get an update about the local situation. At the Seventh Grand Assembly in April 2008 in Macahua (area of Ixiamas), there were almost 140 participants from 22 communities, 22 members of CIPTA, CPILAP and CIDOB, and about 30 other “institutional representatives” both from government and NGOs (CIPTA 2008a). Jesús Leal from Buena Vista, previously vice-president, became the new CIPTA president. By November 2008 several of the other elected members of the *directorío* had already become inactive, and the “tour to the communities” had yet to take place, but CIPTA continued with a very busy agenda of workshops in the region, national-level lobbying for the TCO Tacana II, and international events.

This rather detailed reconstruction of CIPTA’s beginning and slow but steady growth and consolidation (summarized in Table 2) has shown that, at least in Iturralde, Tacana mobilization was certainly no sudden “irruption of indigenous identity”. During the first years, external support both from more experienced indigenous organizations and the national government via SAE was crucial. Even so, for different reasons, San José, Tahua, Santa Ana, later Caigene and probably a few other communities decided not to continue as CIPTA members. In Tumupasa, a larger and more heterogeneous village with a variety of local institutions and organizations, for many years there continued to be doubts about the usefulness of organizing as indigenous

50 This move was not appreciated by many *Tumupaseños* who have a tradition of voting for more conservative parties, although according to the LdAs it brought three government projects worth almost US\$ 250,000 to the village from 2007 on.

people.⁵¹ CIPTA membership increased slowly, starting from those communities with more regular contact among each other in the southern part of the province and reaching out to the north only from 1997 on, when the demands for the two TCOs became formalized. In later years, the consolidation process shows the importance of strong and continuous leadership⁵² and concrete benefits, the most important being land tenure security. Another important factor was certainly the continuity of WCS support focusing on capacity development and strategic issues related to land and natural resource management, but also providing a financial security to CIPTA which few indigenous organizations have. Despite various initiatives, CIPTA's own income sources are still limited, but the organization is in much better conditions to negotiate projects now than ten years ago.

5.2 *The titling processes of the indigenous territories: TCO Tacana I and II*

Since the 1950s, individual Tacana communities in Iturralde had made attempts to secure their land base by getting titles under the 1953 agrarian legislation (Tumupasa, the four communities in Ixiamas, Bella Altura and Capaina) or even purchasing the land from the estate owner (Buena Vista in 1954). In Tumupasa, the Catholic priest in the 1980s had supported the community in getting titles to almost 12,000 ha, subdivided into usually 50 ha individual plots that could not be sold to outsiders. However, this area considered only the current population and was much smaller than the hunting area which covered at least 65,000 ha (Wentzel 1989b: Chapter 5). The recognition of indigenous territories since the 1990 march and the creation of the legal figure of TCO⁵³ make it possible for indigenous peoples to go beyond this, if they fulfill a series of requirements and follow a sequence of steps. These include the formal submission of the territorial demand by one or more indigenous communities

51 Ixiamas, the third of the initial Tacana missions, apparently never even considered joining, but the four Tacana communities in its surroundings did so from early on.

52 In contrast to his two predecessors, Celín Quenevo (CIPTA vice-president in 1995, president from 1997-2008 and now head of CIPTA's technical unit), grandson of a respected elder from Napashi, is fluent in Tacana, an important asset in a situation where language is the most obvious marker of indigenous identity. In 2008, he was named "Conservation Hero" by Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund for his achievements (<www.conservation.wdwpubaffairs.com/Resources/pdf/ConservationHeroOverviewDraftOctober>; 23.03.2009).

53 *Ley INRA, Art. 41, VII*: "Las Tierras Comunitarias de Origen son los espacios geográficos que constituyen el hábitat de los pueblos y comunidades indígenas y originarias, a los cuales han tenido tradicionalmente acceso y donde mantienen y desarrollan sus propias formas de organización económica, social y cultural, de modo que aseguran su sobrevivencia y desarrollo. Son inalienables, indivisibles, irreversibles, colectivas, compuestas por comunidades o mancomunidades, inembargables e imprescriptibles".

or peoples, usually represented by a recently created formal organization (need for a *personería jurídica*); a government “certification of indigenouness” (despite Bolivia’s 1991 ratification of ILO Convention 169 which stipulates self-identification); a study of *necesidades espaciales*; the usually complicated *saneamiento*⁵⁴ process (carried out by companies), and the final granting of the legal title. The overall process has been criticized not only for being bureaucratic and slow, but – despite political declarations to the contrary which stress the priority of indigenous rights – also for favoring “third parties”, i.e. facilitating the legal recognition of non-indigenous landholdings, and of timber concessions (Griffith 2000; Riverstone 2004; Vries 1998). This became quite obvious in the case of the Tacana TCOs.

After years of local discussions, supported first by the ILO project (which had recommended a Tacana territory of at least 300,000 ha in Iturralde) and since 1994 by SAE through workshops and studies (especially Chiovoloni 1996), in July 1997 CIPTA filed the claim for the TCO Tacana with INRA in La Paz. The demand covered 769,891 ha in two parts, separated by the urban area of San Buenaventura, and initially included 18 (later up to 24) communities from the south of Iturralde to the Madidi river (approx. 660 families or 3,060 people; none from the Beni Department). This led to an *Estudio de Caracterización Preliminar* by SAE already in August 1997 and to the official admission of the claim by INRA in January 1998. However, only an area of 549,465 ha (still in two parts) was admitted due to the already mentioned large overlaps with logging concessions (more than 200,000 ha) and an ongoing *saneamiento* process (CAT-SAN) in the area of Ixiamas. After this initial confusion about *saneamiento* modalities, the entire area was treated as a TCO demand, and in August 1999 the existing land titles in Tacana communities were converted into the TCO legal category. However, the VAIPO study on *necesidades espaciales*, following 1999 guidelines which started from per-capita calculations, recommended an area of only 389,816 ha (VAIPO 2000); in the final May 2001 decision, this was raised to 405,665 ha. Also, the various public expositions about the *saneamiento* process made it clear that “third parties” would receive titles to over 200,000 ha,⁵⁵ which caused CIPTA to comment:

54 *Ley INRA, Art. 64*: “El saneamiento es el procedimiento técnico-jurídico transitorio destinado a regularizar y perfeccionar el derecho de propiedad agraria”, i.e. according to *Art. 66. I.I*, “La titulación de las tierras que se encuentran cumpliendo la función económico-social o función social definidas en el artículo 2 de esta ley, por lo menos dos (2) años antes de su publicación, aunque no cuenten com trámites agrarios que los respalden”. Three types of *saneamiento* are distinguished (*Art. 69*): *Saneamiento Simple* (SAN-SIM), *Saneamiento Integrado al Catastro Legal* (CAT-SAN) and *Saneamiento de TCO* (SANTCO).

55 In April 2008, INRA informed the CIPTA assembly that of the 695 (!) properties within the TCO, 629 had been titled (CIPTA 2007a).

“Entonces, lo que queda para las 20 comunidades demandantes de la TCO con 3.500 habitantes son las tierras marginales, inundables y menos accesibles de la región” (LdA CIPTA, Sept. 2000).

Nevertheless, parallel to its struggle with the government’s complicated and biased procedures, CIPTA negotiated rather skilfully with the various “third parties” affected by its land claim, from the management of the Madidi National Park to municipal governments and elites, timber companies, ASLs and colonists represented by the regional federation FESPAI (Lehm 2003). With regard to the park, the solution was the creation of a *zona histórico-cultural* in the Yariapu area where Tumupasa was founded. However, the same region in late 2001 was claimed by San José under its TCO demand (overlap of 80,000 ha). In the end, San José’s demand was only admitted by INRA in May 2003, after excluding this area and reducing the total claim to 225,832 ha. The zoning of the proposed TCO Tacana developed in the 2001 management strategy also served as instrument vis-à-vis other stakeholders.

From late 2000 on, in both *municipios* there were at times rather violent protests against the TCO process. In San Buenaventura, in November 2000 and May 2003, the *Centro Cultural Tacana* became the target of local anger about indigenous land rights. CIPTA agreed to an enlargement of San Buenaventura’s *radio urbano* in mid 2001 (including the community Caigene which was initially included in the TCO demand) and the creation of the municipal forest area in late 2002, and after the TCO title was issued, the situation calmed down.⁵⁶ Ixiamas in 2002 prohibited the circulation of CIPTA leaders and contested the first title at the *Tribunal Agraria Nacional* (TAN). The 2001 appearance of an alternative Tacana organization, the *Consejo Indígena de Comunidades Tacana de Ixiamas* (CICOTI) made CIPTA consolidate its presence in Ixiamas through the creation of a *Subcentral* in 2002. Its first coordinator Richard Collins in late 2007 was elected *alcalde* of Ixiamas, which greatly improved relationships. By early 2002, a first agreement had been reached with the colonists to join forces against both *municipios*, although negotiations with FESPAI continued about land for their younger generations, the colonists’ focus of interest now being areas reverted as *tierras fiscales* (which according to *Ley INRA* could still be added to the TCO).

The May 2002 INRA resolution for TCO Tacana I⁵⁷ covered only 325,327 ha, was divided in 44 separate areas and excluded not only agriculturally used properties, but also active timber concessions (see Figure 1 and Table 3). It took until March 2003 for the TAN to turn down all legal interventions against the TCO Tacana. In June

56 San Buenaventura in its 2008/2009 calendar even promoted the Tacana Cultural Center (*El Centro Cultural Tacana es el mayor atractivo de la capital*).

57 Resolución de Dotación y Titulación de Tierras Comunitarias de Origen TCO-DOT-TIT No. 004/2002.

2003, the Bolivian President signed the title which was handed over in Santa Cruz in July 2003. However, since the few official *mojones* (boundary markers) were considered insufficient protection, between 2004 and 2006, with WCS support, the TCO boundaries were physically demarcated, with signs posted every 100 m along over 150 km of the TCO boundary and in strategic places (Figure 9).⁵⁸ Also since late 2004, the TCO has been extended through two “compensations” of 46,606 ha and 16,558 ha, respectively, reaching a total of 388,491 ha. This is still 17,174 ha short of the Tacana’s “entitlement” according to the spatial needs study, and the area is a patchwork of plots or rather a “swiss cheese” with major gaps in its very center, quite a challenge for integrated territorial management. Nevertheless, by 2008, INRA reported that the internal physical delimitation had covered ten communities (188,618 ha; CIPTA 2007a), and CIPTA contributed to the consolidation of the previous distribution of 50 ha parcels agricultural land in Tumupasa. The TCO Tacana thus not only provides tenure security vis-a-vis outside encroachment (at least for the titled parts of the Tacana territory), but CIPTA and its member communities are also in a process of developing internal arrangements to accomodate community and individual rights and interests (see Fitzpatrick 2005).



Figure 9. Border sign for the TCO Tacana I in Tumupasa, December 2008 (S. Wentzel).

The demand process for TCO Tacana II in the far north of the province (to the northwest of TCO Araona and just south of the Madre de Dios river and the Department

58 Even so, boundary problems and increased risk of wildfires due to land clearing by both colonists and larger landholders were reported e.g. from Santa Rosa de Maravillas in 2005 (Fernandez Suarez & Caballero 2008).

of Pando, see Figure 1), started in 2001, covering over 454,000 ha for the four communities Puerto Pérez, Las Mercedes, Toromonas and El Tigre (CIPTA 2007: 16). First admitted in 2003, in August 2006, an area of 349,789 ha was put under the SAN-TCO procedure, and in April 2007, INRA “immobilized” 342,931 ha as *área de saneamiento*. This less populated area faced somewhat less conflicts with “third parties” than TCO Tacana I,⁵⁹ and WCS supported the elaboration of a sustainable development strategy for the area as basis for the “spatial needs” study, improving the methodology. Nevertheless, in mid 2009 the process was still depending on decisions in the TAN due to overlap with forest management plans approved despite the *inmovilización*.

5.3 Experiences with territorial and natural resource management

CIPTA received strategic support from WCS and other allies not only for the titling and demarcation of its two TCOs, but also for their sustainable management. The *Estrategia de Desarrollo Sostenible de la TCO Tacana con Base en el Manejo de los Recursos Naturales 2001-2005* (CIPTA & WCS 2002) was developed and approved in a participatory process at a time when CIDOB was also only starting to discuss concepts and strategies for what it now calls *Gestión Territorial Indígena* (GTI) and which is evolving towards an approach for *Autonomías Indígenas* under the new constitution. The five broad and complementary objectives of the strategy, slightly rephrased in 2004, were as follows:

- “Consolidar la TCO Tacana a favor de las comunidades demandantes.
- Fortalecer nuestra participación en la planificación y control de los servicios de salud, educación, infraestructura y equipamiento en los municipios. Para ello, promovemos la creación de distritos municipales indígenas.
- Fortalecer la organización del CIPTA y de sus comunidades, buscando la equidad entre hombres y mujeres.
- Ejecutar proyectos estratégicos de manejo de los recursos naturales en la TCO y apoyar proyectos para el mejoramiento de la economía de sus familias.
- Contribuir a la revalorización de nuestra cultura a través del Centro Cultural Tacana” (CIPTA & WCS 2002: 293; CIPTA 2004: 6).

59 In August 2006, at the first international meeting of Ese Ejja in Cobija (supported by the indigenous federation of Pando CIPOAP and its Peruvian Madre de Dios counterpart FENAMAD), parts of the TCO Tacana II were claimed as their ancestral homeland along the Rio Heath at the border with Peru, although it was currently not inhabited by Ese Ejja (Informe-Resumen 2006/ 2007). A follow-up visit to the CIPTA office in April 2007 led to plans for a joint visit to proposed TCO, to discuss the Ese Ejja plans to reoccupy the area, but this does not seem to have led to a formal inclusion of the Ese Ejja into this TCO demand.

TCO (ethnic composition)	Department/s (Province/s: some Municipality/ies)	Area originally demanded (ha)	Area titled (ha and date)	Observations
Tacana I (only Tacana, approx. 20 communities) ⁶⁰	La Paz (Iturralde: San Buenaventura and Ixiamas)	almost 770,000	325,327 (5/2003) 46,606 (6/2005) 16,558 (no title yet?) => 388,491	still 17,174 ha to be compensated
Tacana II (only Tacana com- munities: Puerto Pérez, Las Mercedes, Toromonas, El Tigre)	La Paz (Iturralde: Ixiamas)	approx. 454,000	–	342,931 ha under <i>saneamiento</i>
Tacana III (communities?)	Beni (Ballivián: Reyes)	?	146,267 (12/2007)	(no further information)
Pilón Lajas (12 communities, Tsiman, Moseten & Tacana)	La Paz (Sud Yungas, Larecaja, Franz Tamayo) & Beni (Ballivián: Reyes)	396,264	346,127 (7/2008)	(titled already in 1997)
San José de Uchupiamonas (one Quechua-Tacana community)	La Paz (Iturralde & Franz Tamayo)	approx. 300,000	165,41244,644 (both 4/2005) => 210,056	
Tacana-Cavineño (communities?)	Beni (Yacuma)	557,366	261,829 (3/2007)	(no further information)
Multiétnico II (30 communities, 24 Tacana, 6 Cavineño & Ese Ejja)	Pando (Manuripi, Madre de Dios) & Beni (Vaca Díez, Ballivián)	441,471	289,471 (2/2001) 118,114 (8/2005) => 407,585	(no informa- tion on cir- cumstances of second title)
TOTAL			1,760,355	(without TCO Tacana II)

Table 3. TCOs exclusively or partially owned by Tacana, 2008.

Sources: Franco (2004), INRA (4/2008; for titled area), Terceros (2004), Vries (1998).

60 The TCO title was received by CIPTA for Tumupasa, San Silvestre (Napashi), Macahua, San Pedro, Carmen Pecha, Santa Fe, Santa Rosa de Maravilla, Buena Vista, Altamarani, Capaina, Bella Altura, Puerto Guzmán, Tres Hermanos, San Miguel, Villa Alcira, Carmen del Emero, Esperanza del Enapurera, San Antonio de Tequeje, and Cachichira.

First activities under the strategy included the participatory elaboration of a *Reglamento de Acceso, Uso y Aprovechamiento de los Recursos Naturales Renovables* which could only be finalized in 2008 (CIPTA 2008b) and the implementation of which is supported by an *automonitoreo de cacería y pesca* in several communities; a small projects fund for a variety of community activities (currently up to US\$ 5,000/project), radio programs and, importantly, from the beginning a strong emphasis on strengthening CIPTA's financial and administrative management capacities. The estimated necessary investment was US\$ 2 million, not counting the considerable pre-investment of almost US\$ 1 million spent up to this point (CIPTA & WCS 2002). By the end of 2008, the strategy still served as major reference and was being updated and complemented by plans for specific areas like wildlife management. Since it is impossible to document and discuss the large amount of projects implemented by CIPTA or its member communities under the strategy (see CIPTA 2007), only two rather different areas of activity will be briefly presented as examples.

5.3.1 Indigenous Timber Extraction

As mentioned before, local people since the mid 1980s had been involved in commercial timber extraction, experimenting with different organizational strategies and various arrangements with timber companies and sawmill owners. Once the TCO process advanced, CIPTA⁶¹ managed to convince and support these local initiatives to convert themselves into *Asociaciones Forestales de la TCO Tacana*, which in some cases meant several additional years of preparation and paperwork to have their first *Plan General de Manejo Forestal* (PGMF) for a 25-year-cycle approved. By 2006, there were 14 initiatives with management plans covering 70,802 ha of forest, including 5,000 ha by CIPTA itself as income-generating strategy for the organization.⁶²

For example, AGROFORT in Tumupasa was founded in 1997 as ASL by 21 persons (the legal minimum being 20, this included some outsiders); the leaders had been involved in the first timber cooperative in the late 1980s. It became an indigenous association with less and only local, often related members in 2000 and started harvesting the 7,700 ha area in 2001. Extraction and commercialization of logs were the next bottleneck, solved by 2005 by buying a used sawmill to produce sawn timber sold with added value (Benneker 2005). By 2008, they were producing about 5,000 m³ per

61 With considerable support from WCS and BOLFOR (the municipal forest management units did not feel in charge of technical assistance in the TCOs).

62 In this case, 40% of the income is for the organization, 40% used to cover expenditures, 20% to build capital. For the indigenous forest user groups, the proposed division was initially 40% for the members, 40% for community projects, 10% to build capital, and 10% for CIPTA.

year, which resulted in about Bs. 40,000 profit (field notes Nov. 2008). The largest Tacana association is San Pedro in the Ixiamas area (24 members), founded in 2001 and producing since 2002 (Lehm & Escovar 2004). The association manages over 21,400 ha of forest and has the highest level of production among all, but there are also internal conflicts in the community due to ongoing illegal logging (CIPTA 2008a). All together, the *Organizaciones Forestales Comunitarias y Sociales* (OFCSs) in the Ixiamas area, between 2005 and 2008, signed timber sales contracts reaching almost Bs. 2.6 million (El Diario, 15.12.2008).

By 2004, the indigenous associations accounted for 37% of the timber production in the province (60,000 ha of forest in TCOs), vis-à-vis about 20% by ASLs (80,000 ha of municipal forest areas) and only 10% by private concessionaires which still controlled 345,000 ha of public forest but preferred to buy timber on local markets rather than extract it themselves. Over 20% came from legalized but obviously unsustainable forest conversion into agricultural land, the remainder from small-scale management plans (Benneker 2005: 15). In July 2005, a meeting of all (at the time eight) forest management groups within the TCO Tacana in Tumupasa led to the foundation of ORFITI (*Organización Regional Forestal Indígena Tacana de Iturralde*) which a month later became a member of the new national organization AFIN (*Asociación Forestal Indígena Nacional*). At the same time, however, *cuartoneo* continued within the TCO, and there was discussion about necessary sanctions.

For the members of ORFITI, after years of investment of time, effort and often private funds, once harvesting started, economic benefits finally became reality, though often below the level expected – or possible in illegal logging. Due to the high costs involved and uncertain benefits, the groups also did not perceive timber certification as a viable option for increasing revenue. These experiences are in line with results of a recent study of over 60 indigenous timber user groups in Bolivia (Pacheco 2007) and challenge the promotion of community forestry which was *en vogue* during the last decade.⁶³ For the TCO and its inhabitants, the only direct benefit from handing over considerable areas of valuable forest to relatively small groups of people, is the obligatory contribution of initially 10% of the total income (later 3% of the total

63 Revenues come from both regular payments for those working in the forest and a share in eventual profits. In July 2007, presenting their experiences at an international conference in Brazil, the AGROFORT representative stressed that they “had to modify the way we work just to break even” and to “lower our revenue expectations” (ITTO Tropical Forest Update 17(4) 2007: 18). Talking to people involved in AGROFORT and APIAT in Tumupasa in late 2008 certainly did not leave me with the impression that they were reaping huge profits. A 200% increase in family income is reported from the new forest user groups in Carmen Pecha and Macahua, but the importance of this increase depends on the previous level of monetary income which is not specified (CIPTA 2008a).

value calculated at the price of the cheapest wood) to CIPTA, which is not paid by all. Indirect benefits are contributions to the local economy, and in principle territorial defense through occupation and sustainable management, though in practice both APIAT and especially AGROFORT had to give up parts of their forest areas due to colonist invasions at the TCO margins during the *saneamiento* process. Overall, the benefit-cost ratio of community forestry in the TCO Tacana I still seems problematic, especially since the sustainability of the 25-year-cycle is open to question.

5.3.2 Indigenous Ecotourism

The best known case of indigenous ecotourism in the region is actually located outside of the TCO Tacana and operated by San José de Uchupiamonas at the Chalalán lagoon close to the Tuichi river in the Madidi National Park, three hours by boat downriver from the community and about five hours upriver from Rurrenabaque. This initiative of a group of community leaders who had previously participated in private sector tourism activities in their area involves about 75% of the 100 families (Limaco 2004; Mamani, Limaco & Limaco 2006). The *Albergue Ecológico Chalalán* was supported from 1995 to 2001 by a project implemented by CI which focused both on infrastructure and capacity development and ended with a full transfer of assets and management responsibilities to the community enterprise.⁶⁴ Since its opening in June 1998, the lodge (cabins for up to 24 tourists) caters to a segment of international tourists willing to pay about US\$ 100/day for a usually two to three-day package. The number of annual visitors rose from 200 in 1998 to 1160 in 2002 (Robertson & Wunder 2005: 72). The community enterprise has brought salaries and shared benefits to those involved (at a level estimated at about US\$ 40,000 in 2003; Robertson & Wunder 2005: 73), and to San José as a community the processing of the TCO title, improved services, local pride and to some degree also cultural revitalization.⁶⁵ Due to its isolated location, San José could hardly offer any services nor economic perspectives to its population, many of whom were leaving the village (40 families in the 1980s) and are now said to be returning. Among the lessons learned, the initiators stress the importance of offering quality services to tourists, without humiliation, and reinvesting some of the benefits in new tourist enterprises and the diversification of local economic activities, e.g. non-timber forest products and agroforestry systems (Mamani, Limaco & Limaco 2006).

64 A grant of almost US\$ 1.5 million from the Interamerican Development Bank, an investment evaluated as “both financially and economically efficient” (Malky Harb et al. 2007: 13) but certainly not replicable (see also discussion in Robertson & Wunder 2005: 67-78).

65 See Stronza (2008) on a similar experience in the Peruvian Amazon.

Since 2002, CIPTA has supported a more modest approach in its member community San Miguel del Bala on the Beni river (about one hour upriver from Rurrenabaque), a US\$ 150,000 project (UNDP, CARE & CI) with a significant community contribution: 180 work days from each of the 35 *socios*, valued at US\$ 35,000. The “Community Eco-Lodge” (seven cabins) started operation in October 2005, charging about US\$ 60 per day for its package which also includes transportation, accommodation, meals and guided tours through the forest and to the neighboring community, which does not seem to have changed its daily rhythm due to the visitors (about 700 in 2007, down to less than 100 in 2008). Based on San Miguel’s experience, CIPTA has developed a strategy for Tacana ecotourism with plans to expand to Tumupasa and Ixiamas (CIPTA 2007: 41). In view of the rather competitive environment of eco and ethnotourism in the region, in 2008, five indigenous community tourism enterprises (including the two described above) formed an alliance to improve their marketing, promote their approach focused on community benefits – and defend their comparatively high prices. Their major current problem seems to be a shortage of visitors (all operate below capacity), caused in part by the chronically volatile political situation in Bolivia.

Comparing the two strategies of forestry and tourism, both from an environmental and cultural perspective, indigenous ecotourism, despite the at least initially necessary considerable external support, seems to be the less problematic alternative, as long as it is controlled by the communities. However, it can only be an option for a limited number of communities and even there needs to be complemented by other income sources. Indigenous timber extraction, while requiring less initial external investment and in principle having the potential to benefit more communities, faces serious management challenges and environmental risks. Since these and all other community enterprises involving natural resource management in the region still face many challenges, in February 2005 and August 2006 WCS supported two meetings to exchange experiences with over 100 participants from communities all over the north of La Paz, which led to a declaration demanding improvements in national policy:

Consideramos que las normas establecidas en el Código Civil, Código de Comercio y Régimen Tributario no responden a la realidad de los emprendimientos comunitarios productivos (Tejada et al. 2007: 27).

Overall, given the Bolivian legal, political, institutional and economic context, CIPTA – with considerable constructive support from WCS⁶⁶ and other partners which are

66 WCS, an initially wildlife-oriented conservation organization, has certainly grown with and benefited from this collaboration. Its relationship to CIPTA is one of partnership that goes much beyond the immediate concern of protecting natural resources in the Madidi Park and surroundings.

slowly but steadily handing over – has achieved a lot in the last almost 20 years. A USAID official recently commented that CIPTA “has graduated from being an organization that has been under the tutelage of the Wildlife Conservation Society to an organization that is now managing its own program and funds from USAID”.⁶⁷ According to those who worked closely with CIPTA during the last decade, the organization is one of the few lowland indigenous organizations in Bolivia prepared to cope with its new role as “territorial manager”.⁶⁸ As Celín Quenevo said in his activity report to the last Grand Assembly:

El CIPTA ha contribuido en los modelos de gestión y administración propia de sus recursos naturales del territorio, para una autonomía Indígena en la propuesta de la nueva constitución. [...] un modelo de gestión territorial en proceso de desarrollo, [...] con el apoyo de sus líderes y sus comunidades, buscando consolidarse cada vez más en una actividad productiva de emprendimientos comunitarios empresariales (CIPTA 2008a: 14).

The main challenges for the future, however, are not so much natural resource management nor even economic issues but the institutional questions spelled out in the second objective of CIPTA’s strategy, which in my view have shown comparatively little progress. In the context of whatever *autonomía indígena* will exactly turn out to be in Bolivia under the 2009 constitution, the roles, responsibilities and interrelationships of the multitude of local and regional institutions will certainly have to be clarified and redefined. Indigenous organizations like CIPTA, created for the purpose of political representation in the struggle for land and natural resources, under *Ley INRA* have become land owners and project managers. They may now turn into indigenous local governments of TCOs as administrative units (taken out of and functioning parallel to non-indigenous municipalities) and take over a range of services funded by the national government. This process should be based on a critical evaluation of the experiences of the OTBs and *distritos municipales indígenas* in Bolivia, and of similar experiences in countries like Colombia and Panama.

5.4 Departments of Beni and Pando

As was mentioned, the processes of dispersal of Tacana from the old missions during the rubber boom and afterwards due to the creation of cattle ranches or sugar estates went from the area of San Buenaventura and Rurrenabaque somewhat up but mainly down the Beni river, reaching its northern tributaries in the Departments of Beni and Pando. There is still relatively little systematic research on these communities, so

67 Connie Campbell, Amazon Conservation Coordinator, USAID, interview Feb. 2009 (<www.ecoindex.org/new/record/2009/february.cfm>, 22.05.2009).

68 Zulema Lehm, Robert Wallace and Kantuta Lara, pers. comm. Nov.-Dec. 2008.

that the following reconstruction of Tacana mobilization beyond Iturrealde can only be sketchy. Similar to the case of CIPTA which ended up limiting its membership to the Province of Iturrealde, these processes also tended to follow administrative divisions, a political strategy the Bolivian lowland indigenous movement seems to have copied from the peasant movement.

5.4.1 Area of Rurrenabaque, Department of Beni

In the early 1990s, some communities close to Rurrenabaque under the leadership of Máximo Rada (from Carmen Soledad) first organized as a local branch of the national peasant federation CSUTCB. After at least two years of contact with CIPTA,⁶⁹ in September 1997, they applied for membership now as OCOR (*Organización de las Comunidades Originarias de Rurrenabaque*) which represented seven communities. In January 1998, they were accepted by CIPTA under the condition of leaving the CSUTCB, and OCOR participated in some CIPTA activities.

OCOR was initially hoping to attach its member communities' land claims to CIPTA's TCO demand, but this attempt failed for various reasons.⁷⁰ Due to what was reported as “manipulation” by Eco Bolivia, OCOR experienced an internal crisis in mid 2001, had to leave CIPTA and only slowly recovered during 2002 under a new leadership. Since its three member communities located near Rurrenabaque – Carmen Soledad, Puerto Yumani and Puerto Motor – in the meantime were experiencing increasing land conflicts with colonists, they formed a *Comisión de Tierras* and with legal support from the *Pastoral Indígena* submitted their land claims under the comparatively simple modality for *comunidades campesinas* to the INRA office in Trinidad. By 2004, two had received their land title; the third was delayed due to a more persistent conflict with a private land owner.

The case of the OCOR member communities located upriver from Rurrenabaque – Carmen Florida, Real Beni and San Antonio de Sani – was different, since their communal lands are located within the Pilón Lajas Biosphere Reserve and Indigenous Territory (see Table 3). Within Pilón Lajas, of the approximately 700 inhabitants (twelve communities) about a third are said to be Tacana, mainly located along the Beni river (Peredo-Videa 2008: 4; Riverstone 2004). By 2003, these three communities had joined the CRTM (*Consejo Regional Tsiman-Moseten*), the indigenous organization

69 This process was initiated and supported by DED which had the idea of uniting all Tacana organizations in the area (Giesel, Coaquira & Terhorst 1998: 5; Kiefer 1997). According to Giesel, Coaquira & Terhorst (1998), the Tacana population in the area of Rurrenabaque was about 1,000 at the time.

70 This part is based on a summary of events contributed by Heike Knotte (May 2009) who also worked with OCOR during her DED-assignment in the region between June 2000 and July 2003 (Knotte 2003, 2004) as well as additional information from her successor Esther Lopez (June 2009).

owning the TCO and involved in the management of the biosphere reserve, thus benefiting from its land tenure security and structural, technical and financial long-term government and NGO support. This decision was finally accepted by OCOR, and cooperation with CRTM developed especially at municipal level. Together they formed a *Distrito Municipal Indígena* in Rurrenabaque which entitled them to a direct representative in the *Comité de Vigilancia* in 2003 (a post shared between the two organizations), and they managed to have some communal projects included in the annual municipal development plan. In 2004, OCOR tried to re-establish relationships with CIPTA, without much success. From mid 2005 to mid 2006, OCOR (now four communities) implemented a project on organic production and agrotourism (GEF small grants program, US\$ 27,900). The document states that in these communities, 90% of the population is Tacana, the remainder “población migrante de origen occidental aceptados al interior de las comunidades”.⁷¹ Presently, OCOR again only represents the three communities close to Rurrenabaque.

In 2003, a new Tacana organization OCIT(B) (*Organización de Comunidades Indígenas Tacanas de la Provincia Ballivián*) was founded and claimed TCO Tacana III which was said to overlap in part with the northeastern portion of the Pilón Lajas area.⁷² According to 2008 INRA data, in December 2007 it received a title over 146,267 ha which are located further downriver, reaching from Nuevo Reyes to beyond Monterrey (see Table 3 and Figure 1). This location is just across from TCO Tacana I, and since communities on both sides of the river use natural resources on the other side as well, coordination of management strategies will be important.⁷³ For the time being, no further information is available on this new TCO nor its communities.

Overall, especially in contrast with the rather strong and clear Tsiman identity in the region, on the Beni Department side of the river, “Tacana” seems to serve mainly as an ethnic label for local, non-colonist communities of mixed and certainly also Tacana descent. The different organizational processes among the communities in the Province of Ballivián, Beni Department, deserve further study.

71 <www.sgp.undp.org/web/projects/8614/produccion_organica_y_agroturismo> (19.01.2009). According to Heike Knothe, these outsiders have to follow community rules, e.g. participation in communal projects (Knothe 2004: 13-14). A description of Tacana identity by an OCOR member is quoted as follows: “El Tacana viene de un origen de nuestros ancestrales, que hablaban el Tacana [...] de cual estamos orgullosos y que estamos tratando de recuperar. Somos orgullosos de ser Tacana” (Knothe 2004: 63).

72 <www.parkswatch.org/parkprofile.php?l=eng&country=bol&park=plbr&page=hum> (04.02.2009).

73 Robert Wallace (WCI), pers. comm., June 2009. The situation seems similar to that of San Miguel del Bala in Iturralde where I was told in late 2008 that some communities used to utilize land and resources on both sides of the river but are now increasingly confined by administrative boundaries.

5.4.2 North of the Department of Beni and Department of Pando

Further north, among the “Tacana diaspora”, the mobilization process has been much more dynamic and also somewhat better documented,⁷⁴ although the ongoing relationships between these Tacana and their region of origin are hardly mentioned. Among the population of Tumupasa, for example, according to my 1987 census, about 5% (41 persons) had been born “en el Beni”, as people would refer to the region of rubber estates from Cavinassas to the north.⁷⁵ Due to their kinship ties, they could return and reoccupy land in Tumupasa, but some – like the families who founded Santa Ana – were said to have difficulties to reintegrate into the labor-demanding village organization. Also, during my field research, in January 1987 I accompanied a group of people from Tumupasa and Santa Ana who had been recruited for seasonal work as Brazil nut gatherers in *barracas* downriver and was able to gather the following information:

One Riberalta-based firm of French and Swiss origin in particular, the *Casa Brailard*, later *Casa Seiler* and today *Casa Hecker*, preferred workers from Tumupasa, Ixiamas, and Reyes who were giving “excellent results” [...]. Until today a substantial portion of Hecker’s employees are of Tacana origin. Of the 927 employees on the November 1986 payroll of the company’s four major *barracas* [...], 28% had last names which clearly linked them to Ixiamas and Tumupasa, and many others may have been of Tacana origin but were no longer identifiable by this crude criterion alone (Wentzel 1989b: 49).

Similarly, a 1981 survey in northern Bolivia in 28 settlements (164 households) reported seven Tacana speaking settlements and 42 households with Tacana parents or grand-parents; overall, it found “forest languages represented by a surprisingly high proportion of survey respondents who claim Tacanan-speaking parents or grand-parents” (Romanoff 1992: 125).⁷⁶ However, in general, studies about the northern Bolivian extractive economy rarely focus on the ethnic origin of the rubber tappers and Brazil nut gatherers (Ruiz 2005; Stoian 2006), and anthropological studies have concentrated on the smaller, more isolated indigenous peoples.

74 Several rather repetitive articles by Herrera Sarmiento (1998; 2003; 2005; 2006; 2009), the author of the 1997-1998 SAE/VAIPO studies to support the TCO TIM II demand; reports by CEJIS (*Centro de Estudios Jurídicos e Investigación Social*), a legal aid NGO which in the mid 1990s started to work in the region (Céspedes Zardan 2003; Franco Semo 2004; Pueblos 2005), and a US anthropological dissertation (Bathurst 2005).

75 Places mentioned included individual *barracas* also on the Orthon and Ivon rivers, rivers or cities both in the Departments of Beni and Pando.

76 According to one of Bathurst’s elderly informants in Santa Rosa, whose father had been recruited in Tumupasa, in the *barraca* on the Ivon river where she grew up, they were all “*Tacanistas* (Tacana speakers)” (Bathurst 2005: 52).

Since the final decline of the rubber estates in the mid-1980s, there has been a trend to form independent *comunidades campesinas*, given the legal framework at the time and political and organizational support from peasant federations and the Catholic church – “un proceso de campesinización” (Franco Semo 2004: 25). Indigenous mobilization in the north did not start among the Tacana. In early 1989, about 20 Ese Ejja, Chácobo and Cavineño, despite their differences,⁷⁷ got together and founded CRENOB (*Comité Regional Étnico del Noroeste Boliviano*) in Riberalta. CRENOB – like CIPTA – received initial support from CPIB, but also from the Swiss Evangelical Mission which since the mid 1970s had worked among them, and from local professionals. By 1991, the organization had converted itself into CIRABO (*Central Indígena de la Región Amazónica de Bolivia*) and reached out to the other five northern indigenous peoples, accepting Santa Rosa as first and for several years only Tacana member community. Apparently, in the beginning there was both reluctance among communities with “latent Tacana identity” to “come out” as such,⁷⁸ and some resistance to involve them by the smaller northern indigenous peoples, whose ethnic identities were not questioned due to their more recent contact history. In 1994, CIRABO became independent of CPIB and affiliated itself, i.e. its now eight *subcentrales* and 80 communities, directly with CIDOB. After conducting the indigenous census in the region in 1994 together with CIRABO, which seems to have contributed to the increasing indigenous mobilization, in 1995, SAE opened a regional office with a lawyer in Riberalta to support the indigenous movement in their land claims (Herrera 2003: 53-54). At about the same time, the NGO CEJIS started to work in the region as well.

In July 1997, under the leadership of Teodoro Marupa from Santa Rosa, 13 self-identified Tacana communities created OITA (*Organización Indígena Tacana de la Amazonía*) and named him *guaraji* (a reference to the system of traditional authorities in the Franciscan missions), later *Capitán Grande* (a term used among the smaller ethnic groups in the region). Tacana from the north also participated in the second indigenous march that year. This process of Tacana mobilization was clearly linked to the claim for the TCO *Territorio Indígena Multiétnico II* (TIM II),⁷⁹ filed by these

77 A Cavineño leader recalls the experience as follows: “En el año 1989, con los ese ejjas y los chacobos, los cavineños decidieron fundar [...] CRENOB. Eso no fue fácil porque los cavineños y los ese ejjas éramos enemigos. Al principio, los ese ejjas nos tenían miedo y, cuando llegábamos en las reuniones, ellos se salían. De miedo, no querían quedarse en la misma sala y se escapaban. Pero todo se solucionó cuando firmamos, con ellos y los chacobos más, un acto de reconciliación interétnica” (Tabo Amapo 2008: 203).

78 The most “daring” were said to be those which had managed to maintain some independence from the rubber estates (Franco Semo 2004: 30).

79 The first interethnic territory in the south of the Department of Beni had been approved after the 1990 march.

and other communities in September 1996 (see Table 3).⁸⁰ The TCO TIM II demand covered an area of 441,470 ha and included five *municipios* in the Provinces of Madre de Dios and Manuripi (Pando) as well as Vaca Diez and Ballivián (Beni). Among its in the end 30 *comunidades indígenas* (most until recently *comunidades campesinas*), two were Cavineño, four Ese Ejja, all other Tacana with the result that of the total population of 3,905, almost 81% self-classified as Tacana (Franco Semo 2004: 10-11).⁸¹ According to CIRABO, at the time approx. 40 communities with about 4,000 members self-identified as Tacana in its area of influence (Céspedes Zardan 2003: 148). Apparently, the *barraqueros* (rubber and Brazilnut estate owners) did not realize the implications of the TCO demand at first and only reacted when the INRA brigades started working in the area in mid 1998. Then, especially the Hecker company mentioned above, lobbied strongly with the Beni INRA office and intervened at the *Tribunal Agrario Nacional* (TAN) (Villanueva I. 2004).

OITA reorganized in 1999 and elected Antenor Ruela Duri from Santuario in the Department of Beni as second *Capitán Grande*.⁸² At this time, in the Riberalta area,

[...] the case of the Tacana was particularly contentious, and claims that the Tacana of this region were assimilated and not indigenous any more were common – much more so, in fact, than claims to this effect referring to the Chacobo, Cavineño, or Esse Ejja (Bathurst 2005: 7).

Interestingly, what was questioned was the Tacana’s “authenticity” as indigenous peoples (which led to a process of stressing ethnic markers like their language and common history, Herrera 2005), not their right to a TCO in an area which was not their “original” homeland.⁸³

80 Herrera, an early observer, stressing immediate benefits (land rights and projects) but also some common “bagaje socio-cultural simbólico”, describes the process as follows: “Se produjo una incorporación masiva a CIRABO de las comunidades campesinas, que recurriendo a la filiación cultural de los ancestros de algunos de sus integrantes decidieron denominarse Tacana. Inclusive hubieron ciertas comunidades que sin tener ese tipo de ancestros, tomaron el mismo calificativo como, por ejemplo, la comunidad Loreto del Río Madre de Dios” (Herrera 1998: n.p.).

81 During a preliminary SAE study in 1997, only 17 communities were self-identified as Tacana (Herrera 2003: 69-70). Not all these Tacana communities, even if recognized as such first by OITA and in a second step by CIRABO, managed to obtain the legal status of *comunidad indígena*. The final 2000 spatial needs study maintained the number of 30 communities in TCO TIM II but reduced the population to 589 families or 3,595 persons (Villanueva I. 2004: 78).

82 He was ratified in 2003, but a second *Capitanía Tacana* only for Pando was created the same year. In 2005, an INRA publication cites him as follows: “Nosotros somos de Ixiamas, Tumupasa, Tawa, San Buenaventura, Rurrenabaque, Reyes, de todas esas partes y nos han traído a trabajar lo que llamaban el oro negro, la goma” (Canedo & Iturri Salmón 2005: 17).

83 As in the case of Iturralde, it is interesting to also understand “why [...] some forest-dwellers adamant-

In 2000, increased complaints both by CIRABO and the regional peasant movement about violations of *Ley INRA* and especially the *Decreto de las Barracas* led to the third march from Cobija via Santa Cruz and Montero, then on to La Paz. After complicated negotiations, the government withdrew the decree and signed the *resolución de dotación y titulación* for the TCO TIM II. Based on the spatial needs study, about two thirds of the demand were accepted since the area included peasant communities which were excluded and separately titled,⁸⁴ but 33 large estate owners intervened at the TAN. Not without further local pressure, like two major *bloqueos*, was a preliminary title over 289,471 ha issued in February 2001, with the perspective to get compensation later. In August 2005, 118,114 ha were added, so that TCO TIM II now covers 407,585 ha, close to the original demand (see Table 3).

The management structure for this TCO is complex since the title is held together by three indigenous organizations which created a *Comité de Gestión y Administración del Territorio* in early 2001, headed by a Tacana. However, this committee does not seem to have functioned very well and was disbanded, among other reasons because of political manipulation by the authorities in Pando (Franco 2004: 48-49).⁸⁵ Between September 2003 and March 2005, with CEJIS support, the communities started a new joint diagnostic and strategic planning process for TCO TIM II, but a parallel revitalization of the management team continued to be difficult (Pueblos 2005). In comparison to the Tacana in Iturralde, after initial political and legal support for the titling process, the northern communities – faced with the additional challenges of interethnic, interprovincial and interdepartmental cooperation – have received little technical, managerial and financial assistance for the sustainable management of their territory.

As was already mentioned, indigenous and especially Tacana mobilization in northern Bolivia was and is considerably influenced by political rivalries between Riberalta (Beni) and Cobija (Pando) which so far have inhibited the development of a joint “Amazonian” identity (Molina Argandoña 2008). In 1996 already, the Department of Pando created a *Unidad de Etnias* in the prefect’s office, which started

ly refuse to self-designate as indigenous Tacana and/or affiliate with a Tacana community” (Bathurst 2005: 152). The author speculates that possible reasons are pride (avoidance of the ongoing stigma of indigenous identity), social networks (involvement in peasant politics), and private land ownership .

84 In 2001, ten *comunidades campesinas* received titles over 36,000 ha within or in the surroundings of the TCO TIM II claim (Ruiz 2005: 68). I could find no quantitative information on rubber estates or timber concessions in the TCO area.

85 “Los Ese Ejja y Cavineños tuvieron muy poca presencia y participación en la iniciativa” (Herrera 2005: n.p.). The author also mentions that even many of the Tacana communities and individuals had not quite understood the implications of the TCO legal category, expecting communal or even individual titles.

to support the creation of *Distritos Municipales Indígenas*,⁸⁶ parallel to its support for the TCO demands. In 1998, this process, which was also supported by VAIPO, led to the creation of CIPOAP (*Central Indígena de Pueblos Originarios de la Amazonía de Pando*) in Cobija, only among and for the indigenous peoples in Pando (Tacana, Cavineño, Ese Ejja, Yaminahua, Machineri), i.e. separate from and weakening CIRABO and at least initially seen as both politically and financially quite dependent on the *Prefectura* (Franco Semo 2004; Pueblos 2005). Nevertheless, in 2002 CIPOAP was accepted as regional federation in CIDOB.

In contrast to the Tacana of the Iturralde north of La Paz, the relationship of Beni and Pando Tacana to place tended to be a particularly strategic one, especially for those located in border regions. [...] [R]umors suggested more resources were available [in Pando, SW] from *políticos*, indigenous and otherwise, who were trying to expand their power base and increase their legitimacy and authority (Bathurst 2005: 66).

By 2008, the Tacana had become quite important for the Department of Pando. The *Unidad Departamental de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios*, as it is now called, lists twelve Tacana communities among its clientele of 26 communities (46%), with a population of 1,038 in a total of 2,920 (36%) – a list which CIPOAP uses as well. During the September 2008 violence in Pando which led to the removal of the opposition prefect, lowland indigenous identities were actually not highlighted e.g. in reports on the death of Bernardino Racua, according to INRA the “héroe del saneamiento de tierras del Norte Amazónico” and great-grandson of Bruno Racua, the Tacana hero of the Acre war (Figure 10). However, when I visited CIPOAP in December 2008, I was proudly given a recent book published by the *Universidad Amazónica de Pando* on “Arqueología y etnografía de la cultura tacana” (Saiquita Villanueva 2008). It is a rather romantic reconstruction of supposed Tacana culture (including staged photos) based on extrapolations from archaeological excavations (mainly at what is considered a “fortaleza militar inca-tacana” at Las Piedras, Municipio Gonzalo Moreno), ethnohistory and field visits to twelve among the supposedly 22 Tacana communities mainly in the province Nicolás Suárez in Pando and the north of Beni.⁸⁷

86 E.g. in the Provinces of Madre de Dios (Municipio Gonzalo Moreno) and Manuripi. As in other parts of the country, these DMIs are reported not to have functioned well, mainly because the municipality continued to control central government funding (Céspedes Zardan 2003: 174).

87 Statements like “Los Tacana son dueños territorialmente desde Pando hasta Rurrenabaque, pasando por las provincias del norte paceño” (Saiquita Villanueva 2008: 60) indicate a clear tendency to instrumentalize the Tacana for regionalist purposes. Unfortunately, I have no further information on local politics in Pando to further pursue this analysis.



Figure 10. Monument for Tacana hero Bruno Racua, Plaza of Ixiamas, November 2008 (S. Wentzel).

6. Final remarks

The different but related processes of “Tacana mobilization” in Iturralde, Beni and Pando – as part of the indigenous movement in Bolivia, the Amazon and beyond – are an example of the close interactions and mutual influences among actors and events at the local, regional, national and international levels, documented and analyzed in an increasing body of literature (e.g. Brysk 2000; Jackson & Warren 2005; Yashar 2005). Looking back at the changes over the last twenty years in lowland Bolivia, formally marginalized and virtually unknown people and peoples like the Tacana have emerged as self-confident political actors. In a context of increasing global recognition of individual and collective human, including indigenous rights and growing environmental concerns, and national level democratization and state reform, through a combination of strategies lowland indigenous peoples managed to (re-)gain control over considerable extensions of lands with their renewable natural resources. However, most TCOs are not (yet) the consolidated territories demanded by the indigenous movement.

Anthropologists (including myself) and others, while often themselves to different degrees involved in these processes, are still grappling with some of the emergent phenomena, like the political “resurgence” of ethnic groups long declared extinct or assimilated, and the impacts this trend has on “the remainder” of the rural population which does not – or cannot – self-define as indigenous. Two of the studies about

“Tacana mobilization” are examples of a tendency to criticize the way certain indigenous leaders, communities or peoples utilize (“manipulate”) their new options in their discourses and practice, including the image of the “noble savage” which anthropologists and environmentalists bestowed upon them during the last decades.⁸⁸ These authors thus explicitly or at least implicitly question their “authenticity” and “legitimacy” – as if other political actors did not use similar “strategic representations” (Lauridsen 2002a: 85) or “performances” (Jackson & Warren 2005: 554). In my view, the evaluation of these phenomena is not so much an academic question but depends on the observer’s political stance with regard to indigenous rights – and ultimately his or her models for states, economies and societies.⁸⁹ Other authors are more interested in understanding the ways indigenous identities are being (re-)constructed or created (“invented”), despite often strong and ongoing stigmatization in broader society, and the meanings that these identities have for the participants of these processes. They tend to sympathize with the fluidity and flexibility of indigenous identities and territories and warn that these risk to get unduly “fixed” by national legal and administrative systems which (at least to some degree need to) define right holders and demarcate boundaries.⁹⁰ These analyses can become important inputs for countries which are still in the phase of designing political and legal solutions for the complex issues of how to define the subjects and the substance of indigenous rights.

Going back to the two questions raised at the beginning of this article and starting with the second, i.e. if all the changes in Iturralde and beyond would have been possible without an *ethnic* mobilization, the answer is clearly no. The fact that so far, self-identified Tacana communities in seven TCOs have received legal titles to a total of 1.7 million ha (partly shared with Cavineño and Ese Ejja communities; see Table 3) would have been impossible without their mobilization as *pueblos indígenas*. Those

88 E.g. the only available study on aspects of Tacana mobilization in Tumupasa: “Many Tacanas interviewed during my fieldwork would represent themselves as the caretakers of the forest” but “The present day natural resources management of the Tacana does not in all respects fit the image of the ecological Indian” (Lauridsen 2002b: 12, 15). – On the processes in Beni and Pando, Herrera has similar views: “El proceso de construcción identitario tacana [...] es altamente dinámico e instrumentalista” (Herrera 2009: 12).

89 “Indigenous movements are posing a new postliberal challenge. They are challenging the homogenizing assumptions that suggest that individuals unambiguously constitute the primary political unit and that administrative boundaries and jurisdictions should be uniformly defined throughout a country. They call instead for more differentiated forms of citizenship and political boundaries, ones that grant individual rights as citizens but that also grant collective rights and political autonomy” (Yashar 2005: 298).

90 “The need to eliminate fluid conceptions of Tacana identity is created by the world system within which the Tacana reside” (Bathurst 2005: 167).

communities who, despite similar historical and/or current conditions, opted for not declaring themselves Tacana, were – if at all – titled as *comunidades campesinas* and received smaller areas, missing in a way an historical opportunity. In contrast, colonists in the area of Iturralde knew that they would receive plots of 50 ha/family, much more than what they had in their regions of origin. They also managed to negotiate boundary changes with CIPTA to accommodate their interests, so that I do not see an equity problem between the two peasant groups (postulated by Lauridsen 2002a). The main challenges now are the protection and management of the TCOs, which will have to include building and/or maintaining “good relations” with the neighboring colonist settlements, and a more critical joint analysis of and struggle against large scale “development” projects proposed for the region.

The first question, “who benefits?” from all this among the Tacana themselves has really not been addressed by any of the studies and reports reviewed (a gap which should be filled). For Tumupasa (I have no basis to comment on other situations), my impression is that “la gente de los chacos”, at the time of my research the most “traditional” families living far away from the village center and hardly participating in village politics, have not had much involvement in the processes described throughout this text. Tacana mobilization was mainly, as village politics before, led by *vecinos*, many of whom – with more or less emphasis on their Tacana heritage and identity – are now involved in CIPTA, CIMTA, APIAT, AGROFORT etc.⁹¹ However, everybody shares the benefits of – still far from perfect – land and natural resource tenure security in the TCO. Also, during my last visit, I was actually struck how little almost all original *Tumupaseño* houses and other indicators of material wealth had changed in two decades – especially in comparison to the growing number of recently arrived outsiders in the village who are the ones operating stores, bars, restaurants, hotels, transport services, sawmills etc. and who managed to install themselves on strategically located *lotes urbanos* sold to them in not very transparent procedures by the local authorities. Social differentiation among the Tacana themselves thus does not seem to have increased very much, despite commercial timber extraction and other market oriented activities. However, if the trend vis-à-vis the outsiders continues, the outcome may be similar to Ixiamas where the Tacana now live at the margins of their old mission, which would leave CIPTA’s headquarters in Tumupasa strangely out of place.

91 By my return 1998 already, there were only very few families left who lived close to their fields, most having established permanent residence in Tumupasa or Napashi to be closer to schools and other services.

Annex – List of Acronyms

(only those that appear more than once or without immediate explanation)

ACA	Amazon Conservation Association
AOS	Ayuda Obrera Suiza
APCOB	Ayuda para el Campesino Indígena del Oriente Boliviano
ASL	Asociación Social del Lugar
BOLFOR	Bolivia Sustainable Forest Management Project, USAID
CAISB	Complejo Agroindustrial de San Buenaventura
CAT-SAN	Saneamiento Integrado al Catastro Legal
CDF	Centro de Desarrollo Forestal
CIDOB	Confederación de Pueblos y Comunidades Indígenas del Oriente Boliviano
CIMTA	Consejo Indígena de Mujeres Tacana
CIPLA	Consejo Indígena del Pueblo Leco de Apolo
CIPOAP	Consejo de Pueblos Originarios de la Amazonía de Pando
CIPTA	Consejo Indígena del Pueblo/de los Pueblos Tacana
CIRABO	Central Indígena de la Región Amazónica de Bolivia
CORDEPAZ	Corporación Regional de Desarrollo de La Paz
CPIB	Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni
CPILAP	Central de Pueblos Indígenas de La Paz
CRENOB	Comité Regional Étnico del Noroeste Boliviano
CRTM	Consejo Regional Tsiman-Moseten
CSF	Conservation Strategy Fund
CSUTCB	Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst
FESPAI	Federación Especial de Productores de Abel Iturralde
GEF	Global Environment Facility, World Bank
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labor Organization
ILV	Instituto Lingüístico de Verano (= SIL)
INRA	Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria
LdA	Libro de Actas
MAIPO	Ministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCOR	Organización de las Comunidades Originarias de Rurrenabaque
OPIM	Organización Indígena del Pueblo Mosetene
OTB	Organización Territorial de Base
PEIB-TB	Programa de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe para Tierras Bajas PILCOL Pueblo Indígena Leco y Comunidades Originarias de Larecaja
SAE	Secretaría de Asuntos Étnicos
SAN-SIM	Saneamiento Simple
SAN-TCO	Saneamiento de TCO

SERNAP	Servicio Nacional de Áreas Protegidas
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SIM	Swiss Indian Mission, Schweizer Indianermission
TAN	Tribunal Agrario Nacional
TCO	Tierra Comunitaria de Origen
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
VAIPO	Viceministerio de Asuntos Indígenas y Pueblos Originarios
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society.

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